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THE WORK

OF THE

HOLY SPIRIT

IN CONVERSION,

CONSIDERED

IN ITS RELATION TO THE CONDITION OF MAN AND THE WAYS OF GOD;

WITH

Practical Addresses to a Sinner,

ON THE PRINCIPLES MAINTAINED.

BY JOHN HOWARD HINTON, M.A.

THIRD EDITION, REVISED.

LONDON:

WILLIAM BALL AND CO.

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1841.

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TO

THE THIRD EDITION.

A THIRD edition of this work having beeen called for, I have taken the opportunity of submitting it to a severe revision, both of sentiment and diction. In the latter respect I hope I have effected some improvement; nor have I found myself altogether without employment in the former. It is not that my views on the main subject—the ability of man for his duty—have undergone any change; but I have detected one point in which I had not consistently maintained them. I am bound to acknowledge the inconsistency, and to explain the correction I have made of it.

In the former editions of this work, the third part commenced with a statement that impenitent sinners are encouraged to pray for the Holy Spirit; and the first chapter of it was devoted to "the ministration

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of the Spirit in answer to prayer." In a tract which I have subsequently published * I have opened a different view, and one which I feel, I confess, to be not only more satisfactory, but the only scriptural and consistent one. I have, therefore, omitted altogether the portion which originally stood as chap. i. part iii.; and have modified accordingly the argument on the question of a sinner's praying for the Spirit, in page 276.

I have found occasion also to rewrite, and considerably to enlarge, what I had before said on the subject of regeneration. This will be found at page 232.

At the close of the first edition I appended a few questions in a catechetical form, and an enlarged catechism at the close of the second. This I have now omitted. Upon maturer consideration, I think religious catechisms universally objectionable. My reason is, that, by the peculiar use into which it is brought, a catechism practically supersedes the scriptures, and gradually acquires for itself in the mind of the learner the character of a standard of truth and orthodoxy. The regard paid to the catechism of the church of England is an obvious and melancholy illustration of this idea; and a similar influence has been exerted—not less truly although less extensively—by the first and second catechisms of Dr. Watts, that of the Assembly of Divines, and others. It would be a mischief that the scriptures should be

* On Prayer, 32mo.

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thus practically superseded, even were the catechism in all cases "a form of sound words," inasmuch as it contains the words, not of God, but of man: but the mischief is immeasurably aggravated by the consideration, that there is no security for its truth. I do not wish here to lay stress upon the fact—which however is obvious enough—that religious catechisms, as a class, contain large admixtures of error; what I mean to insist on is, that there is not, and cannot be, a single catechism the freedom of which from error can be guaranteed. All of them are productions of fallible men, and are consequently fallible. Nor do I suppose that I run any hazard in saying, that no catechism in existence contains unmixed truth. It is, therefore, a thing of incalculable danger to allow a catechism to become practically a child's bible, and to usurp the place in his regard which is due only to the oracles of God. Yet such is the effect, even when answers in the catechism are largely supported by quotations from scripture; the catechism is not brought to be tried by the bible, but the bible is brought to support the catechism.

I am not to be understood in these remarks as objecting to catechetical instruction, but only to the use of catechisms. The difference between these is obvious and important. Catechetical instruction, or instruction after the manner of question and answer, is undoubtedly of the best adaptation and the highest utility; but it in no way involves the necessity of using a catechism. Let the teacher use the bible,

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and from it both frame his questions and draw his answers. It may be more trouble, but it has many and most important recommendations. So fully convinced, at least, is the author of this book, of the hurtful and perilous tendency of using catechisms, that, if he ever entertained the ambitious thought of adding one to the number by which the religious world is already perplexed, he has abandoned it for ever. He would rejoice if all the catechisms which ever existed should be consigned to oblivion.

In the year 1834 an edition of the present work was published in the United States, "with an Introduction and Additions," by my brother, the Rev. Isaac Taylor Hinton, then at Richmond, Virginia. I take this opportunity of expressing my affectionate gratitude to him, for the trouble he has taken to render the work more adapted to a transatlantic circulation, and the fidelity with which he has executed his design. One remark in his preface it may not be improper for me to quote.

"It is possible, that, from the similarity existing between some of the sentiments, and even, perhaps, in a few instances, the expressions, contained in this volume, and those of some eminent American theologians of the present day, it may be surmised, (as indeed it has already been by one of the ablest of our periodical journals) that the former resulted from a perusal of the writings of the latter. Justice demands that the editor should state, that he can vouch for the fact from his own knowledge, that, at

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the period when Mr. Hinton wrote this work, (in 1829) he was not conversant with the writings of American theologians of a later date than those of the justly celebrated Edwards. Whatever opinion may be formed of the following pages, they are the result of an independent mind, taking the sacred scriptures as the only and the sufficient rule of faith and practice."

On this I have only to observe, that I should have thought it no dishonour to have learned from such able theologians as are to be found in the United States; but that the fact is as my brother has stated it. It is only since writing this work that I have had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with the later American divines.

I have growing reason to be thankful, for the influence which the pages I am now again committing to the press are exercising on the public mind. May I be permitted to say, that I could wish the *whole* impress of them to be received? Perhaps I had better frankly confess, that I have found some excellent persons who, saying that they agree with me in sentiment, only partially agree with me, retaining some collateral sentiments which I cannot but deem erroneous. Thus, to quote an example of what I mean, one esteemed brother holds, as I do, that all men can come to Christ; but then he holds also, as I do not, that some will come to Christ more than the Father draws to him. Another agrees with me in the for-

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mer opinion; but he believes that the origination of the Christ-ward progress will be of man, and not of God. A third is equally concurrent with me in the main principle; but he is surprised how I can maintain in harmony with it the doctrine of election. I am happy to find sensible, reflecting christians agree with me in any point; but I should be more happy if they would agree with me in all. I must profess, at all events, that, in the collateral points I have mentioned, I do not agree with them. It will be seen by a careful reader that I do not. I thank God that he has enabled me to hold in reverence and love the doctrines of sovereign and distinguishing grace; and my rejoicing is, that, in man's ability for his duty, I have advocated a sentiment from which they derive both their consistency and their glory.

The advertisement to the second edition I have omitted. The only important part of it will be found incorporated with the work itself, at page 246.

London, January 12, 1841.

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PREFACE.

I AM extremely unwilling to associate any personal considerations with a subject of such deep intrinsic importance as that of the following treatise. Much rather would I have stood retired, as concealed by the glory of the truths I shall be employed in exhibiting, than have had any occasion to divert the attention of a single reader to a topic of so small comparative moment as the mere opinions of the writer. But the circumstances under which I write do not allow me this gratification. It must be known to some of the readers of these pages, that the sentiments which I have already published have been conceived, unjustly as I imagine, to be derogatory to the character and office of the Holy Spirit, if not inconsistent with any belief of his influence. It will, therefore, infallibly be supposed, that I have resolved upon this undertaking because I felt myself challenged to an explicit statement of my opinions; and, while some will read what I may write with, perhaps, scarcely any other design than to see how far I may clear up the alleged intricacies or contradictions of a theological system, it will be difficult for others to avoid associating a similar feeling with the perusal of this volume.

That I have commenced this work in part because of the alleged inconsistency of my sentiments on some points with scriptural views of the work of the Holy Spirit, I am not disposed to deny; but this is far from being, either my only, or my principal impulse. Not at all unwillingly, indeed, do I answer the challenge

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which has reached me, to explain and to vindicate my sentiments, inasmuch as I am not only without consciousness of doing dishonour to the Spirit of all grace, but persuaded that the views which I have advocated render him more abundant glory; but I do so much the more willingly, I do it even joyfully, because the subject itself, on which it calls me to treat, is one of infinite excellency, and one upon which nothing can be wisely and seriously written, without being, under the divine blessing, conducive to good. Nothing can be more important than to have right views of the Holy Spirit's work, and few things more necessary than to lead persons generally to a habit of vigorous and scriptural thought respecting it. My aim and my hope will be, therefore, to the utmost possible extent, to treat the subject *as by itself*, as though it had never been a matter of controversy, and especially as though the writer had no personal relation to the argument; and, while I do this, in order that the following pages may be the more eminently fitted for general usefulness, I earnestly entreat those who peruse them to concur with me in the same design, and to read, not with a view of criticising the writer, or of estimating his success as a controversialist, but with a desire to become thereby both wiser and better. That what I write may be adapted to this end, may God in mercy grant me the teachings of that blessed Spirit, of whose work I am about to treat! Whereinsoever I may err, either in sentiment or in spirit, may he graciously forgive! And the effort itself, with all its feebleness and imperfection, may he condescendingly own and accept, as a tribute from a grateful heart to the glory of his name, and as

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an instrument offered by a willing hand to the promotion of his cause!

It might be expected, perhaps, that I should take some notice of those who have written in express opposition to me; but, though I desire to treat them with the utmost respect, and to cherish for them all due affection, as fellow-labourers, according to the best of their judgment, in the cause of God and truth, the reasons which I have assigned above induce me to proceed without any further reference to them. As to their works, I have endeavoured substantially to answer them, without reducing the discussion of truth to a dispute with individuals.

In order to anticipate a feeling of dissatisfaction, which might possibly arise in the perusal of this treatise, I beg the reader carefully to observe, that it refers to the *work of the Spirit*, and *not to the work of Christ*. The work of our Lord Jesus Christ is of unquestionable necessity and glory. His divine person, vicarious sacrifice, and prevailing intercession, constitute the substance of the gospel, and the only way for a sinner's approach to God. But as no writer can be expected to treat of all subjects in one book, so I conceive that the necessity and excellency of the work of Christ stand perfectly distinct from the question discussed in the following pages. When we ask, *whether a sinner has or has not power to come to God, or to fulfil his duty*, we do not expect to receive for answer, *No man can come to God but through Christ; a sacrifice is necessary*. Undoubtedly it is, and it would be unutterably to our surprise if ever we had been supposed to question it. But, by such a reader, the ground on which we stand would be quite mis-

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understood. We suppose the necessity of an atonement to be admitted; we take for granted the actual and absolute helplessness of man in this respect, and maintain, as decidedly as any person can maintain, that he has not power, in any degree, nor in any sense, to make an expiation for sin: we assume also that the blood of Christ has been shed, as that of the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," so that the way is now open for a sinner's return to God, through him. Not until this point has our inquiry any existence. It is only then that we ask, Has a sinner power to come to God,—that is, to avail himself of the way mercifully opened for his return.

Every candid reader will accept this explanation, and estimate the argument of the following pages accordingly. If it should be thought, nevertheless, an unfair position to start from, I only say, that I can set out from no other. I never imagined such a thing as that man was capable of making an atonement for his sins, nor will I ever affirm it. If I cannot maintain man's ability to do all his duty, without maintaining by implication his ability to expiate his transgressions, this must be shown with more clearness than has hitherto been attempted. Certain as it is that an atonement for sin is indispensable, if sinners are to be saved, I am not convinced that it is the duty of a sinner to atone for his iniquities, or that God has ever required this at *his* hands. Satisfaction for sin could never be required, but with a view to salvation; and nothing has ever been required of a sinner in order to salvation, but acceptance of a sacrifice already offered, or prepared. The necessity of an atonement

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is altogether dependent upon the hypothesis that sinners are to be saved; if they are not to be saved, there is no such necessity. And, although it is true that the ever blessed God has entertained the idea of saving them, it is uniformly declared that he has done so in a way of mercy, providing for them the needful expiation, and not requiring it of them; in which latter case salvation would have been of justice and of debt. I will not, however, pursue this subject further, without further need. Let me only hope that my readers will bear fully in mind, that the doctrine of atonement for sin is not involved in that of man's ability, as regarded in the following argument. The question simply is, whether, the death of Christ being supposed, a sinner is able to come to God through him.

As the subject of this volume is not the work of Christ, so neither is it the whole work of the Spirit, but simply that work in the conversion of a sinner; and this only in its relation to the condition of man, and the ways of God. The recollection of this may tend to prevent dissatisfaction that I have not asserted the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit; that I have not expatiated on the several parts of his glorious work; and that I have not even entered into any detailed account of conversion itself. Upon all these points I believe I am truly 'orthodox,' and I am quite willing to afford any reasonable evidence that I am so; but it is on all accounts better, that the argument should not be encumbered with matter not necessary to its clear and satisfactory prosecution.

If a mistake does exist in the general belief and mode of instruction on the point here discussed—if those who teach inculcate, and those who are taught

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imbibe, the notion that men cannot repent, or do any other part of their duty, while they certainly can, this is manifestly an evil of no small magnitude, and one most urgently demanding a remedy. Leaving it to the following pages to argue the question whether men can repent, I may here allude, for a moment, to the immense force with which the contrary sentiment has long been impressed upon the public mind. The ministry of the divine word has been widely and deeply impregnated with it; and, as this is the principal means of general religious instruction, from this cause alone the opinion must have obtained a very extensive prevalence. But, in addition to this, if we examine the formularies which are employed for the instruction of the young, we shall find the same sentiment expressed, without, so far as is known to the writer, a single exception.* The catechism, is, perhaps, a more powerful engine than the pulpit itself; since the ideas it contains are thrown into the mind at so early an age, and with an air of such unquestionable authority, as almost inevitably to form the

* The following may serve as a specimen :—

Catechist. My good child, know this, that thou art not able to do these things of thyself, nor to walk in the commandments of God, and to serve him, without his special grace.—*Catechism of the Church of England.*

Q. Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?—A. No mere man, since the fall, is able, in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God.—*Assembly's Catechism, Q.* 87.

Q. Can you of yourself love and serve God and Christ?—A. No; I cannot do it of myself, but God will help me by his own Spirit, if I ask him for it.—*Watts's First Catechism, Q.* 20.

Q. But is not your heart itself sinful, and have you power of yourself to repent of sin, and to trust in Christ, and obey

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characteristic elements and controlling principles of all future thought. If, therefore, the sentiment of man's inability be poison, (and I believe it is poison of the most direful kind) it is poison which has been mixed for ages with the whole supply of religious knowledge among us, the word of God alone excepted; and even this, in defiance of its own purity, has been made subservient to the mischief. Into the breast of almost every creature who has received any evangelical instruction at all, has this pernicious notion been infused by the teachers to whom he looks up, often with too implicit deference; and, like his mother's milk, it has become

him?—A. We have sinful hearts, and cannot do these duties of ourselves; but God has promised his own Holy Spirit, if we pray for it, to renew our hearts to holiness, and help us to do his will.—*Watts's Second Catechism, Q.* 50.

Can you make your own heart good?
I am so wicked and so weak,
My heart I cannot better make.
Little Child's Catechism in Rhyme, p. 11.

Can you change your own heart when you please?
It is not in my power, I own,
To melt this stubborn heart of stone;
My evil passions to subdue,
And my depraved soul renew.
Milk for Babes, p. 34.

Q. Are we able to change our own hearts?—A. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil. (Jer. xiii. 23.) —*Abridged Bible Catechism*, viii. 2.

Q. Can you reform and renew your wicked heart?—A. No; I am dead in trespasses and sins.—*Brown's Short Catechism, Q.* 14.

I am not aware of any exception to this melancholy uniformity.

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insensibly incorporated with his whole being. Is it not time that vigorous efforts were made to correct the mischief?

Because, in some instances, the question here considered has undergone much discussion with little apparent advantage, and persons have arisen from conversation, or from reading, neither convinced nor enlightened, it has been conceived that some fatality attends it, as though it were never to be understood, or as if it required some peculiar metaphysical skill; but, when due allowance is made for the influence of pre-conceived opinions, and habits of thought and expression, not only long established, but interwoven with all that is dear and important to us in religion itself, it is conceived that the subject is attended with no extraordinary difficulty. For, if there were, it should operate to prevent us from forming *any opinion at all.* How can that be difficult *in itself*, respecting

Let it be observed, that the catechumen is taught that he cannot serve God, in the strict and proper sense of the term *cannot*; the only sense in which a young child can understand it, and that very sense in which, as shown in the following pages, *it is false.* If any person will take the trouble to look for a question or answer relating to our just responsibility for our conduct, he will find that this is a point systematically avoided. Upon this highly important subject the mind is left totally uninformed, nor can any instruction be given upon it, without contradicting and destroying the fallacy introduced in its stead. How is it no catechism-maker has happened to insert this question, *Why does God hold you accountable?* Or, if he had, upon the principle which has been universally adopted, what answer could have been given to it, but this,—*Because I am not able to regulate my own conduct?* The reader may observe, also, that the only method by which it is attempted to surmount the difficulty, is by saying that God has promised his Holy Spirit to them that ask him: a specious but delusive representation, which will be found exposed at p.98 .

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which we find it very easy to make up our minds, provided it be *on one side*? This is exactly the case with the question before us. Persons in general find no difficulty whatever in understanding, or in supposing that they understand, that man *cannot* do anything; yet there is an insuperable difficulty in comprehending that he *can*. The grounds of both these conclusions are of precisely similar character; and any one who knows *why* he believes the former, is quite competent to examine all the reasons which may be adduced in behalf of the latter. To those who have never thought upon the subject at all, and who *take it for granted* that man cannot do anything, merely because others think or say so, there may be some difficulty; a difficulty, however, by no means peculiar to this subject, but attaching, with little difference, to every topic upon which the mind has never been exercised. Such readers should ask themselves, how far it becomes them to take up any religious sentiments without a knowledge of the grounds of them. Can there, in such a method, be any security against mistake, or any rational conviction at all? If, however, they will not arouse themselves to a sufficient effort, it is only for them to wait a little while, till those who *will* think have gone before them; this fearful difficulty will then vanish of itself, and they will thenceforth find it as easy to believe that man *can* do what he ought, as they now find it to be certain that he *cannot*.

If there is one class of persons who should more especially feel themselves called upon to give the subject of this treatise the most patient and dispassionate attention, and who should most resolutely spurn the fetters of previous opinion and customary

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phrases, it is surely the ministers of the gospel, whose voice is heard above all others in the instruction of mankind, and whose labours exert so powerful an influence in the formation of public opinion. How important it is for those to speak according to truth, who speak for God; and for those to lead in the right path, whom so many take blindly for their guides! How soon would the most deep-rooted and wide-spreading errors be exterminated, if the whole public ministry lifted up its voice against them! In all corrections of error, the ministry ought not to follow, but to lead. I am aware, indeed, of the difficulty which there is in doing so. I know that certain forms of sentiment and phraseology sometimes acquire in the eyes of the people a greater sanctity than even the word of God, and I am far from condemning the spirit which dictates tenderness to the prejudices of pious persons; yet it is surely possible to carry such a spirit too far, and, in our unwillingness to wound their feelings, to spare and confirm their mistakes. There is little pleasure in encountering prejudices, but there may be in it an urgent duty, and out of it may arise important results. At all events, the path of the man of God is clear. He has to speak the truth plainly and fearlessly, save the fear of Him by whose ultimate approbation we stand or fall; and perilous will his account be, who shall stand convicted at another day of having kept back any part of the counsel of God, because his people might not like to hear it. If, however, the ministers of the gospel will not *lead* in the progress of truth, they must *follow;* for, with or without them, *truth will prevail.* Though less rapidly, she will diffuse her light among the people, whatever may

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be the ignorance or hostility of any portion of the priesthood. When it is seen that she conquers, all will be pleased to be on the triumphant side; and not least of all the author himself, whose recantation shall not be delayed a moment, when it can be shown to be demanded by the sovereign authority to which he bows.

The subject is the more earnestly to be pressed upon the consideration of the ministers of the gospel, because of its intimate connexion with the revival of religion, a topic to which a measure, though as yet a small measure, of public attention has been drawn. I cannot suppress my conviction, that one reason why the preaching of the divine word has been far less powerful in our land than might have been expected, considering the multitude of voices employed in it, and far less powerful, too, than it has been in a country where such exertions are much less abundant, is to be found in the influence of the sentiment of man's inability for his duty. Comparatively few of the preachers in the United States of America are tainted with it, and it is under the ministry of those who are free from it that the most blessed effects have been produced. Upon this point I cannot refrain from introducing the following interesting testimony, contained in a letter from the Rev. W. C. Walton, of Alexandria, U.S., and inserted with approbation by the Rev. H. F. Burder, of Hackney, in the Supplement to the Evangelical Magazine for 1829:—

"For a number of years after I commenced preaching, my views of man's inability to perform the duties required in the law and in the gospel rendered it impossible for me to see his guilt in neglecting these duties. I maintained that he was culpable for not

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using the means to get a new heart; but it never once occurred to me that he was guilty for *not having* a new heart; or, which is the same thing, for not loving God and obeying the gospel. I did not consider that the enmity against God, which constitutes the carnal mind, is *voluntary*. I often spoke of the necessity of divine influence in conversion, but I did not prove to the sinner, what I now think to be susceptible of the clearest proof, that the necessity of divine influence arises from the *unwillingness* of the sinner to do that which God requires. During that period of my ministry, my preaching was comparatively useless. In the year 1822, providence led me to Baltimore, where my views were changed, and where I was blessed with a revival of religion. I published a narrative of that revival, which has gone through several editions, and which has been honoured as the means of producing several revivals. I have now been in this place about two years, and we have had about one hundred and fifty persons added to our communion, in a comparatively thin population. You will pardon me for saying so much about myself, when I assure you that is not myself, but the truth, and the God of truth, that I wish to magnify. To his name be all the glory."

Whatever causes may be hopefully operating towards the production of similar results on this side of the Atlantic, the author has little expectation of their extensive appearance, until the ministration of the quickening word is, in like manner, loosed from its miserable shackles, and sinners are driven without ceremony from a refuge of lies, which has been held sacred far too long.

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THE

WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,

&c. &c.

PART I.

OF THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONVERSION.

THE form in which the subject of this volume is announced carries with it the general sentiment, that the conversion of a sinner to God is a work in which the Holy Spirit is concerned; and it may be desirable in the outset, to devote a brief space to an exhibition of the scripture testimony on this point. We shall find it to indicate and establish two great positions; namely, that, in reference to the conversion of a sinner, the influence of the blessed Spirit is both necessary and effectual.

CHAP. I.

Of the Necessity of the Spirit's Influence in Conversion.

THE operation of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of a sinner is not occasional, but uniform. Conversion to God never has taken place, and

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never will take place, without it. And if this be the case, it is but saying the same thing in other words, to assert that his influence is necessary to the production of this effect.

This is manifestly a point on which, independently of divine revelation, we have no means of obtaining complete and satisfactory knowledge. When any one does in fact turn to God, under what influence he did so might be doubted, were it not revealed; and yet more difficult might it be to decide whether any other man would turn to God without a given influence, unless that also were declared by a being of competent information. According to their various views, some might suppose one thing and some another; but the voice of authority puts all our imaginations to silence, and announces the truth, as from Him that knows the heart to its lowest depths. We turn, therefore, necessarily and directly, to the language of holy writ; and we may place the passages which bear upon the subject before us in such an arrangement as follows.

1. Sometimes the existence of an unconverted state is expressed by asserting the absence of the Holy Spirit: as in Jude 19, 20, where ungodly men are described as "sensual, having not the Spirit." If the fact of not having the Spirit be evidence of an unconverted state, it is plain that no man is converted without becoming a partaker of it.

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2. Sometimes the presence of the Spirit is made a criterion of a converted state. So when Paul says, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 14. And John bears a similar testimony: "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit," 1 John iv. 13. There can be no force, nor even truth, in these passages, except upon the principle that the influence of the Spirit is uniformly connected with conversion. If in any case it were not so, in that case these texts would be inapplicable.

3. Sometimes the sacred writers directly ascribe to the Spirit the exercises involved in conversion to God. So in 1 Pet. i. 22: "Seeing ye have purified your souls by obeying the truth, through the Spirit." "Obeying the truth," though under another form of speech, is identical with conversion; and the apostle affirms it to have been done "through the Spirit."

4. Sometimes the success of the gospel generally is referred to the power of the same glorious agent. 1 Thess. i. 5: "For our gospel came unto you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit." "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul," Acts xvi. 14. "The epistles of Christ, written not with ink, but by

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the Spirit of the living God," 2 Cor. iii. 3. Now the gospel is the grand means of conversion, and its success lies in the accomplishment of this end; but this is declared to be effected by the accompanying influence of the Holy Spirit.

5. Sometimes the operation of the Spirit is represented as forming an essential part of the method of salvation. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit," Titus iii. 5. Any one who has not experienced "the renewing of the Holy Spirit," therefore, is a stranger to the very operation by which salvation is wrought, and consequently to conversion.

6. Sometimes the condition of man by nature is represented as requiring the influence of the Spirit. "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life. No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him," John v. 40, vi. 44. The only assignable influence by which this opposition can be overcome is that of the Holy Spirit; which, therefore, is clearly necessary to the conversion of a sinner.

7. The change of heart and character involved in conversion is made the subject of a corresponding and characteristic promise. "A new heart will I give you, a new spirit will I put with-

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in you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh: and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes," Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. How much of the excellency and glory of this passage must be lost, if even its very truth were not impeached, on the supposition that the influence promised is not necessary to the end for which it is to be effused!

8. The influence of the Spirit holds a prominent place in the acknowledgements of all good men. It was thus with Paul "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. By the grace of God I am what I am," Rom. vii. 18, 1 Cor. xv. 10. And in accordance with this is the language of all saints, ascribing the glory of their salvation to God alone. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth'ssake," Psalm cxv. 1.

Nothing can be more decisive than the various yet uniform evidence of scripture on the point under consideration; nor is it easy to imagine that any man regarding the authority of the divine word can entertain a contrary opinion, or a sentiment which necessarily implies it. In the face of this overwhelming mass of divine testimony, it were scarcely less than insane to doubt for a moment, not merely the high importance, but the uniform necessity of the Spirit's influ-

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ence to the conversion of a sinner. It may be added, however, that these declarations have an echo in the breast of every man. Those who would read their own hearts would be powerfully led towards this conclusion, even if it had not been revealed; and what the divine oracles affirm, is established by the universal fact, that no man ever does turn to God without the acknowledged interposition of an unseen influence, making him willing as in a day of power. The author cannot conclude this chapter without humbly acknowledging his part in the general truth. As he finds it in his bible, so he finds it in his bosom. There is no fact of which he has a more thorough conviction than this, that in his nature there dwelleth no good thing, but, on the contrary, every evil; and that the influence of the blessed Spirit is truly necessary for him to think a good thought. Had the experience of even a short life not taught him this lesson, he must have been blind and infatuated indeed.

CHAP. II.

Of the Efficacy of the Spirit's Influence in Conversion.

THE second position which, we have said, the sacred scriptures establish respecting the influence of the Holy Spirit in conversion, is, that it

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is certainly effectual. By this language we mean, that, whensoever the Spirit operates upon the heart of a sinner for his conversion, he invariably accomplishes the work. He never abandons the object, nor are there any cases in which his influence is ineffectual to its attainment.

That there are many and great obstructions to conversion is readily admitted; but it must be manifest, we conceive, without any proof, that the divine agent of whom we are speaking is competent to remove them all. Being divine, he is also almighty. Difficulty is a word totally inapplicable to him; and not less so in the conversion of a sinner than in any other work he undertakes. If it be his gracious pleasure, therefore, to operate effectually to this end, there is nothing to hinder him from doing so. But have we reason to think that he will?

1. In taking, as of course we do, the affirmative side of this question, we may argue from the wisdom by which it must be conceived that the proceedings of the blessed Spirit are directed.

Now it is one of the most obvious dictates of wisdom, that a work which we do not mean to finish should not be begun; and not less so that when a work is begun, it should be finished, unless there be some paramount reason for its abandonment. Nor are these dictates of merely human wisdom, since they are stamped with the impress of divine sanction, in the following

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address of our Lord to his disciples, Luke xiv. 28—30, "For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." And if it be thus a matter of just reproach that a man should begin what he is not able to finish, how much more so if he should commence a work which he did not mean, or had not constancy enough to complete, though he were able?

We need not hesitate, therefore, to apply the rule before us to the operations of the blessed Spirit. If his proceedings be sufficiently characterised by wisdom to withdraw them from the mockery of "all who behold" them, he will begin nothing which he does not mean to finish; nor will he, without urgent cause, forsake the work of his own hands. We say *not without urgent cause,* not because we think such a cause has ever existed, or ever will exist; but to make the hypothetical concession for the sake of argument, that, if any good reason can be shown why the work of conversion should be abandoned by its glorious author, we are ready to allow its force. But can any such reason be shown, or even be conceived of, in reference to a being to whom all possible circumstances are foreknown?

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A reason that would lead to the abandonment of a work, should operate yet more powerfully to prevent its being undertaken; so that, as no new reason why the Spirit should renounce his design to accomplish the conversion of a sinner can be supposed to arise after he has commenced his work, its relinquishment, should it ever take place, could be ascribed to no other causes than such as would involve both the undertaking and its author in a total want of wisdom, and a just exposure to dishonour.

But the force of this argument is not yet fully stated. The accomplishment of conversion when the work is begun, we have shown to be necessary to shield its author from shame. But every work of his is to redound to his glory. How much more, then, is it to be maintained that he will make this work complete, since it cannot otherwise "shew forth his praise!" How inconceivably strange would it be, if, instead of this, he were only to surround himself with fragments, which if even beautiful and durable in themselves, would only be on that account the more lasting and afflictive sources of dishonour and regret!

2. If there is force in the general bearing of the preceding argument, it will be augmented by referring to the special character and pre-eminent excellency of the work in question. For if there be any object which, rather than another, a per-

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son of wisdom will strenuously pursue, it is surely such a one as exhibits the highest excellence, and leads to the most important results. Let the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion be regarded in this light. Without assigning it a pre-eminence over all his works, we must at all events allow it a very high elevation among them. It far exceeds the works of nature, and the administration of providence. It is the new creation of the soul in the image of God. On the part of the blessed Spirit, it is the exertion of a holy energy, and the production of a holy result. It is intimately connected with all the hopes and joys, the purity and devotedness, the redemption and glorification of the soul on which he acts. Out of the depths of corruption and iniquity it prepares materials for a holy edifice, a temple of the living God, a monument of grace, to adorn eternally his palace in the skies. In whatever light we regard the conversion of a sinner, therefore, we cannot for a moment imagine that such a work would voluntarily be abandoned by its author. O no! Sooner should creation itself be forsaken, and the course of providence be confounded, than the influences which turn a sinner to God fail of their intended issue.

3. Further confirmation of this sentiment might be derived from the gracious character of the work of conversion. It is undertaken not

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merely for the glory of its author, but also for the happiness of its subject. It is represented as arising from the grace or love of God towards the sinner, and not merely so, but from rich and abundant grace: that is to say, in undertaking the conversion of a sinner the blessed Spirit means to do him a favour, and a favour of unspeakable magnitude and excellency. Now there is plainly no way of realising this representation but by the work of conversion being completed. If it be begun and not completed, if the influences of the Spirit be withdrawn and the sinner be left in his sins, he may be treated justly—nay, in a general view of his condition, he may be treated even mercifully; but it is plain that he does not receive that particular favour which consists in an actual conversion to God, and an intention to communicate which appeared to be announced by the exertion of some incipient influences conducive to this end. It can hardly be conceived that the blessed Spirit would commence the work of conversion without an intention to complete it, or without an exercise of that deep and tender benevolence from which it is declared to spring; but an incomplete conversion, which is in fact no conversion at all, is no exercise of grace at all, since it makes no change for the better, whether conditional or actual, in the state of the sinner himself. To be an exercise of grace, conversion must be not only begun, but

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finished. We therefore conclude that, where it is begun, it will be finished; because it is incredible that the Holy Spirit would represent his proceedings in a light in which they cannot justly be regarded.

4. To add but one consideration more, we may advert to the connexion subsisting between the work of the Spirit and the work and glory of Christ. It is not only for his own sake, nor for the sake of the sinner himself, that the Holy Spirit undertakes the work of conversion; it is pre-eminently for Christ's sake—through the influence of his death, and for the promotion of his glory. Sinners are to be turned to God because Christ died for them, and in order that Christ may be glorified in them. Nothing can be conceived more powerfully to operate on the Spirit himself than such an influence as this. Certainly, if any object can do so, this will call forth his utmost energies and most persevering efforts. Will he ever relinquish a design which he undertakes out of love to the eternal Son of God, and the accomplishment of which is essential to the glory that shall recompense him for his sufferings? Impossible! It is impossible, then, that he should relinquish the conversion of a sinner; having commenced it, he will assuredly carry it on to perfection.

The reasoning which has been here pursued might be carried much further; but sufficient

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has been said, perhaps, to show the grounds on which the sentiment of the efficacy of the Spirit's influence in conversion rests. If it should be observed that we have not, as in the former chapter, adduced individual texts of scripture, it will yet be admitted that our whole argument has proceeded strictly on scriptural grounds, which are, of course, of the same authority and conclusiveness as express testimonies of the divine word. But suppose we inquire, in passing, why it is that express testimonies on this point are not so abundant in holy writ as on some others. The reason plainly is, that it never seems to have admitted of the possibility of a doubt. Whether God, having converted a sinner, would carry on the work of grace to the end of life, *might* have been doubted; and, therefore, it is expressly declared that he will, Phil. i. 6: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." But whether, having put forth his power for the conversion of a sinner, that object shall be accomplished, is a point on which the scripture bears no express testimony, except that which is involved in the declaration that he is "God Almighty."

Upon what ground, indeed, it may well be asked, has it ever been imagined that the contrary could occur? We believe we are correct in

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saying, that it is upon no other than the supposed necessity, on the part of the divine Being, of a deference to the will of man. A man must not be converted, we are told, against his will! To speak of the grace of God, or the influence of the Spirit as irresistible, it is alleged, destroys free-agency! We care not about the word irresistible, which, if employed in this reference at all, means only, as we have said above, certainly efficacious; but it must be manifest, we should imagine, out of what a confusion of ideas this objection arises, since conversion is not the turning of a man to God without or against his will, but a man himself turning to God. It is a change of his entire attitude—accomplished under divine influence, indeed; but only in such a way as to make him willing, which, we suppose, is neither against his will, nor destructive of free agency. It is, at the same time, plain enough, that, if the influence employed in conversion were such as left the ultimate decision to a corrupt and carnal heart, the work would never be accomplished at all.

The author is aware that the Holy Spirit has been supposed to exert upon the minds of sinners some influences which do not issue in conversion. It does not appear to him that any such influences are exerted; and the scriptural ground usually alleged for this opinion is, in his judgment, altogether unsatisfactory and fallacious.

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Among the passages regarded as most directly supporting this idea are the following:—"My Spirit shall not always strive with man," Gen. vi. 3. "They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit," Isa. lxiii. 10. "Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit," Acts vii. 51. We take these passages together, because one explanation is applicable to them all. It is this; that the influence of the Spirit referred to is not his direct influence on the heart (of which we have been speaking), but his influence exerted through an inspired ministry. Such was that of Noah and Moses, of the prophets and the apostles. It was through them that the Spirit strove with men, and it was in them that men resisted him. When Wisdom is represented as saying (Prov. i. 23.) "Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you," the idea is still that of the communication of inspired truth.

When passages from the epistles are quoted with a similar view, we have only to express our surprise at the inconsiderateness manifested by it. Certainly some discrimination was used by the apostles as to the parties to whom they addressed their respective counsels. We know that Paul said, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," on one occasion, Eph. iv. 30; "Quench not the Spirit," on another, 1 Thess. v. 19; and on a third, "Work out your own salvation

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with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 12, 13: but surely he said these things to pious persons, and not to the unconverted. When these precepts are treated as addressed to the ungodly, and made texts (as they sometimes are) for preaching to sinners, there is, in my opinion, a heedless and lamentable perversion of the oracles of God.

The case is still worse, however, with another passage which is frequently employed for a similar purpose; I refer to the words of the apostle in 1 Cor. xii. 7, where he says that "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." The context unequivocally indicates that these words relate only to the supernatural gifts which characterised the early age of christianity, and which more particularly adorned the church at Corinth. These, the apostle teaches, were bestowed on the parties who possessed them for the profit of others.

What has hitherto been advanced may be thus briefly summed up. The influence of the Holy Spirit is both necessary and effectual to the conversion of a sinner. These are sentiments of great glory and deep importance. May God impress them deeply on the heart of the writer, and withhold him from uttering a word or entertaining a thought inconsistent with their truth, or calculated to obscure their excellency!

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PART II.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONVERSION CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO THE CONDITION OF MAN.

THE influence of the Holy Spirit is, as we have just seen, of high importance—nay, of uniform necessity, to the conversion of a sinner. Now this fact obviously indicates a corresponding feature in the condition of mankind. There must be some cause for this necessity, some reason why men do not turn to God without heavenly aid. What is this cause? Is it external, or internal? Is it without man, or within him? Is it voluntary, or involuntary? Does it criminate man, or excuse him?

Few inquiries can be more important than these; a clear answer to them being indispensable to a just knowledge of the condition of our nature, and to a satisfactory view of the bearings of the glorious dispensation—that, namely, of the Holy Spirit, to which our attention is directed.

The uniformity of the fact in all circumstances that men do not turn to God of themselves, as well as the decisive testimony of holy writ that they will not, assures us that the cause sought for is to be found in their own bosom. What-

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ever of an external kind may assume the aspect, or bear the name of a hindrance to conversion, none of these things, nor any combination of them, can be regarded as constituting the grand impediment. In truth, these all derive their influence from the state of mind on which they act, irrespectively of which they are utterly powerless; and were the state of mind right, nothing would hinder man from turning to God. The main and only effectual obstruction is within his own breast.

This obstruction to conversion is well known by the general designation of the corruption or depravity of man's nature. But when we have said this, we have gained no information respecting its precise character; we have merely given it a name, and have still to inquire what may be intended by it. On the specific nature of that fact in our fallen condition which occasions the necessity for the Spirit's interposition an important diversity of opinion exists, which may be stated as follows.

On the one hand it has been maintained, that the necessity of divine influence argues on the part of man a want of power to turn to God: and on the other it has been conceived that the obstacle is not a want of power, but a want of disposition. In reference to the actual want of right disposition in mankind both these classes of divines are agreed, the difference be-

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tween them relating simply to one of two questions: First, whether a want of disposition is the whole hindrance to conversion, or whether there is not also a want of power; or, Secondly, whether a want of power is not identical with, and constituted by, a want of disposition.

Those who affirm that power is wanting chiefly argue, either from express words of scripture, which declares (to take one passage for an example) that no man *can* come unto Christ except the Father draw him; or from the nature of the case, since, if man had power to turn to God of himself, the Holy Spirit could not be necessary for this purpose. Those who maintain that power is not wanting (and the writer is among them) do not shrink from fully meeting these arguments, with others which will be hereafter noticed on the same side; while their proofs are brought likewise from the language of scripture, as well as from an examination of the structure of the human mind and of the actual operation of the Spirit, from the just responsibility of man, from the gracious and sovereign character of the gift of the Holy Ghost, and from the pre-eminent tendency of the sentiment they advocate at once to humble the sinner, and give glory to God.

Such is a bird's-eye view of the field of inquiry which lies before us; a field which comprehends certainly a number of topics most interest-

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ing in themselves, and bearing powerfully on many points of doctrine, experience, and practice. The writer would feel little pleasure in pursuing his task, if he thought it would be barren of spiritual profit; but as he is persuaded this will be by no means necessarily the case, so he implores for himself and his readers that gracious unction, beneath which alone true wisdom is either acquired or increased.

Before entering fully into the discussion, the reader's patient attention is requested to some important preliminary matter, relating generally to the structure and operations of the human mind, and the import of the terms by which we describe them.

CHAP. I.

Of the Structure and Operation of the Human Mind.

If we were examining the movements of a machine, and seeking to understand the causes by which they were either accelerated or impeded, we should probably deem it necessary in the first instance to gain some competent knowledge of the nature of the machine itself; or if we should heedlessly have commenced our investigation without such a preliminary measure, perplexities and embarrassments would speedily con-

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vince us of its necessity. It is thus with the inquiry now before us. We wish to solve problems respecting the state and operations of the mind under particular circumstances, namely, under the prevalence of depravity and the influence of the Holy Spirit. Is it not, therefore, not only desirable, but necessary, previously to acquire a proper view of the structure of the mind itself, and of its general mode of operation? Should we be ignorant or inaccurately informed of these, how can we proceed with satisfaction, or conclude with confidence, respecting the questions immediately before us? Upon these subjects, therefore, we shall here briefly enter, and with the utmost attainable simplicity. We trust that the explanations which may be given will be found neither difficult nor uninteresting; but if in any measure they should be so, let it be remembered, that what is important should never be considered too uninteresting to be attended to, or too difficult to be achieved. In fact the topics on which we are about to enter are not difficult, and they can appear to be so only because to some readers they may be new. They ought not, however, to be mysterious to to any person, and the author hopes they will not be so to any of his readers, after the perusal of the following pages.

1. It has been customary to speak of the

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powers or faculties of the mind, and, doubtless, it is both necessary and just to use this phraseology; yet it should be remembered that, however familiarly we may speak of them, they are things of which, in their own nature, we know absolutely nothing. The whole that is submitted to our investigation is comprehended in the various modes of human action, external and internal. From the fact that certain modes of action occur, we infer that there exist faculties or powers of performing such actions. This conclusion is unquestionably drawn with sufficient justice, inasmuch as we can conceive of no effect without a proportionate and corresponding cause; but still it is important to observe, that it is only by such an inference we arrive at the knowledge even of the existence of our mental faculties. It follows, therefore, that the proper method of investigating the mind of man is to begin, not with his faculties but with his actions. Observe what he does, and you will then learn what are his powers. Our facilities for such an employment can scarcely be considered as less than ample. In how many forms is man continually acting within our observation; while, in truth, the whole mystery is exhibited in our own breasts, and the knowledge of man is nothing more than the knowledge of ourselves.

Let us then imagine one of our species to be before us; or rather, let us turn our eyes inward,

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and mark what takes place there. If I do this, I find that I am perceiving various objects, with their apparent properties; such as the fields in their summer beauty, my children in their early loveliness, with a variety of others, which may be presented to me, either by the senses, or by recollection, or by reflection. Besides this, perhaps, I find that I am also in a state of feeling; experiencing either hope or fear, desire or aversion, pleasure or pain, or feeling of some other kind, in various degrees, or with various modifications. I may yet further find myself upon some occasions, perhaps after considering various motives or modes of action, ultimately determining; as either to attend to some subject, to take some step, or to enter on some pursuit, after which I proceed to act. These observations will be sufficient for the present. Here are matters of fact. We perceive, we feel, we determine; and upon the supposition that these processes argue the existence of corresponding faculties, we go on to say that man possesses one faculty of perceiving, another of feeling, and a third of determining. The faculty of perceiving we may call the Understanding; that of feeling, the Heart; and that of determining, the Will. These three faculties are principally concerned in all human actions.

II. We may now look at each of them a little more closely.

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1. By the Understanding, or the faculty of perceiving, we apprehend according to their apparent nature, and so far as they are suited to our apprehension, whatever objects are presented to the mind. Here it is material to remember, that there are many ways by which objects may be so presented. The most obvious is the eye, which certainly makes us acquainted with things much more vividly than any other organ; but it is clearly not the only channel of access to the mind, distinct perceptions being also produced by impressions on the ear, and by means of every other corporeal sense. In addition to this, the mind is accessible to communication from some beings (*one*, at least, if no more) without the intervention of the senses at all. It is important to observe also, that objects can be presented to the mind out of its own stores, either as brought out of the treasures of memory, or as resulting from the exercise of its own thoughts. A very important portion of these last consist in those judgments respecting right and wrong of which we shall hereafter speak.

Now, whatever object—using this word in a sense sufficiently large to comprehend a sentiment, or anything else which may be perceived by the mind—whatever object is in any way intelligibly presented to the mind, we perceive it inevitably. It is no matter of choice with us whether we will perceive it or not. If I look on the sky, or hear a bell, or am informed of an event, or re-

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collect an interview, it does not lie with me to perceive or not to perceive these things respectively. I do perceive them, and that in a manner altogether involuntary and beyond my control.

It is to be added, that whatever is presented to the mind is perceived according to its apparent nature and properties. Of the nature of things we know little, if anything; we have to do with their properties only, and in a manner perfectly accordant with these is every object apprehended by the mind, if it is in a sane state.

2. By the heart, or faculty of feeling, we become subject to the excitement of desire, aversion, hatred, love, and numerous other affections. These affections must be considered as not existing of themselves, or without a cause. They have always some object. We are never in a state of desire without desiring something; or of sorrow, without something for which we are sorry; excepting indeed in cases of disease, which, of course, are withdrawn from the scope of our present inquiry. In a sound state, and in its healthy exercise, no feelings exist in the mind unless awakened by some object. Until excited in some respect, it is altogether tranquil.

The next material observation is, that our feelings, when excited, correspond with the apprehended nature of the object which has excited them; as fear with the perception of danger, or hope with the prospect of advantage. It is im-

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possible to conceive that there should be any variation from this rule. If ever what I regard as adapted to engage my love inspires me with aversion, I shall not be of sound mind: as long as I am so, my feelings must have an exact correspondence with the apprehended nature of the objects which have awakened them.

All objects have not an equal adaptation to excite our feelings, nor the same objects equal efficacy in all circumstances. But all objects which are adapted to move our feelings at all, are so independently of our choice. A sight of danger, for example, does not appeal to us, as it were in the way of interrogation, whether we will be afraid or not; but the perception of it tends directly to inspire fear, whether we will or not, and it will certainly do so unless its influence be counteracted by some other means. It is, in truth, a general maxim, that every object presented to the mind, having any adaptation to move the feelings, produces infallibly an excitement of them corresponding with its apprehended nature, unless such an effect is prevented by the operation of a counteracting cause. It follows also, that our immediate feelings are in many cases involuntary; they are so in all cases, indeed, in which they are not affected by some voluntary productive or modifying influence.

3. By the will, or faculty of determining, we form resolutions respecting what we will or

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will not be or do. This is clearly not to be understood as referring to our outward conduct alone. Whether we will attend to any given subject, or agree to a certain proposal, and many things more which are entirely within the bosom, are matters for our determination; as also, in truth, is what we shall be, and what we shall feel, as far as these are dependent upon the use of means put into our hands.

The will does not act of itself, nor indeed can we conceive of such a thing. We never make any determination without having a perception of the case respecting which we have to determine, nor without being moved by something so perceived. Determination is neither more nor less than the answer to a question—shall I, or shall I not?—and cannot be conceived of apart from circumstances which give rise to such an interrogatory. If there is no question, there is nothing to be determined; and, if there is nothing to be determined, no determination can exist. Neither can any determination be formed without something in the case perceived to move us to it. In a general way it is perfectly obvious that our determinations do arise from such moving causes. When we say, I will do this, or I will not do that, it is because we see something either attractive or repulsive in the cases respectively; and, if we examine, we shall find that this is uniformly the case. The rule has, and

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can have, no exception. It is of the nature of a rational creature to determine according to apparent reasons; in whatever case a determination may be otherwise formed, if such ever were or can be, it can scarcely indicate less than a derangement, if not rather a subversion of the constitution of the mind.

We go on to observe, that, as we never come to any determination without a moving cause, so every cause acts according to its apparent force; and it tends to the production of a corresponding result by virtue of our intelligent constitution, quite independently of our choice. If, for example, I see danger, and the sight moves me to determine upon avoiding it, it tends to bring me to this determination by its own force as perceived by me, whether I am willing to be so moved or not. My actually determining to avoid it may be hindered by the influence of other considerations, such as the advantage I may derive, or the good I may do, by braving the peril: but my being led towards such a resolution is still involuntary; and each of these modifying considerations also has a tendency to act upon me, whether I will or not, according to its nature and force as perceived by me.

Determinations, therefore, do not in any case originate with the will itself. This faculty never acts, it was not intended to act, it is not capable of acting, of its own accord. It may be moved,

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but it cannot move of itself. It will answer to the slightest touch, but is itself absolutely inert; like gunpowder which, nevertheless, the smallest spark inflames. The exercises of the will not originating with the will itself, but being produced by objects perceived, they are infallibly and inevitably such as are our perceptions of the objects which produce them. They are not voluntary.

In connexion with this statement, and as adapted to remove any appearance of paradox which may attach to it, it may be important to observe, that the cases are very different when we speak of man as a whole, and of his faculties apart. Man is a voluntary agent. Both his actions and character originate with himself. He is, and does, what he chooses or determines to do and to be. His determinations are voluntary, that is, they arise out of his own feelings; and in this self-origination the voluntary nature of character and actions consists. But, taking the faculties of man apart, such language is totally inapplicable. They are not voluntary. They are made to act when acted upon, and precisely as they are acted upon; and however they may give rise to voluntary action in man, there is nothing voluntary in their own. Our faculties have no choice whether they will act or not. How should they? The very notion is absurd. They are but of the nature of mechanism; adapted first to be acted

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upon, then, as they are acted upon, to act, and to propagate their action to a certain and ultimate issue.

Hence it may be seen how untenable the ground is which has been so hardly fought, namely, that the will is, or ought to be, free. Doubtless *man* ought to be free, and we believe that he is so, however fallen and corrupt; but, without any reference either to the primitive or the degenerate state of man, the idea of freedom is totally inapplicable to the will as a part of our intelligent constitution. The will having no power of choice or self-movement, it cannot be either free or bound. From its nature it cannot act until it is acted upon; and, if it does not act as it is acted upon, the mind is no longer sane.

III. Having taken this brief view of the faculties of man separately, let us now consider them in their relation to each other, and in reference to the result of their combined operation.

The mental processes are often so rapid that it is not easy to analyze them, or even to believe them capable of analysis. We shall find, nevertheless, that every one of our actions engages all the powers of which we have spoken, and in a uniform and beautiful order. If we take a journey, it is because we have determined to take it; here is the action of the will. Something moved us

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to this determination, perhaps the hope of pleasure, or a sense of duty; here is an excitement of the feelings, or the action of the heart. But what excited these feelings? Obviously the perception of the duty or the pleasure; here then, lastly, is the action of the understanding. Such is the process which is carried on continually. First objects are perceived by us; next our feelings are excited in accordance with the objects perceived; then a determination is formed agreeing with the whole effect produced upon the feelings; and finally action is induced, in conformity with this determination and all that has preceded it. Viewing the mind in itself, therefore, apart from all modifying or disturbing influences, we have a faculty of perception apprehending whatever is fitted to its powers, and transmitting these apprehensions as it were to an inner chamber, the heart, where lie a thousand susceptibilities, all ready to be inflamed by whatever may be adapted to them respectively; while these again, by their simple or combined energies, lead to determination, and this ultimately to action.

The mechanism is extremely simple yet most beautiful and efficacious; and, as might be expected from the peculiarity of its character, it produces a result worthy of the closest investigation. This result is not merely an external action. Various internal acts and exercises, or permanent states of mind, arise from it too; as, for ex-

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ample, an effort of thought, or an endeavour to cherish, to regulate, or to suppress any particular feeling. But whatever action, external or internal, or whatever feeling, permanent or transient, may be thus produced, it is evident it will have some striking and important properties.

First, It will be intelligent. Everything will be done for some known or knowable reason; since, according to the constitution of the mind, neither can feeling be excited, nor a determination be formed, but under the influence of objects perceived. In this respect mental differs from organic action, such as that of vegetable or animal bodies, which act by the force of physical, and not by that of intelligent causes.

Secondly, It will correspond with the apparent nature of things. Every action being excited by objects perceived, it plainly follows that all our actions will be conformable to our perceptions, or to the nature of things as perceived by us: but every sound mind perceives objects according to their apparent nature; whence it follows also, that, if no disturbing influences interfere, our actions will strictly accord with the apparent nature of things, as truly as the rays of light are reflected from a mirror, or the face of the sky from an unruffled sea.

IV. In these observations we are, of course, to be considered as confining our view to the na-

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ture of the mind itself, and the manner in which it would operate by virtue of its constitution simply, apart from any disturbing causes. At the existence of such causes we have already cursorily hinted, and it will now be necessary more particularly to advert to them. We know that, in point of fact, the conduct of men does not always accord with the nature of things as it is most obviously to be apprehended, and as it is in reality apprehended by them. Besides which, it may well seem strange that a being of such excellence as man, and one, too, upon whose conduct such awful issues depend, should be laid so entirely open to the influence of things about him or within him, that everything should thus tend to excite his feelings, to inspire determination, and lead to action, by its own force, whether he will or not. If he has no choice what he shall perceive, or what he shall feel, or what he shall determine, is he not exposed without defence to impressions of every kind, like chaff before the wind, or like a feather on the ocean, the helpless victim of his circumstances?

We go on, then, to observe, that man is endowed with a faculty of self-regulation and control. The nature and influence of this faculty it is important that we should rightly estimate. We all know that, upon various occasions, we not merely apprehend the apparent properties of things, but we dwell upon them

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with more or less force, and for a longer or shorter period; we pay them, in a word, more or less ATTENTION. We know also the result of this. Some thoughts we immediately banish from our minds, and they are to us as though they had never been; others we dwell upon intensely, and they produce a deep impression. Now the fact is, that the actual influence which an object presented to the mind will have upon us is not to be measured by its own nature and force, but by the intensity with which we contemplate it. A great truth, if we give it little attention, will produce but a small effect; while, if we give them much, we may be vastly wrought upon by trifles.

Whether this power of giving more or less attention may properly be called a distinct faculty of the mind, as by philosophers of great eminence it has been,* is of comparatively little consequence. It is plainly a very influential mode of mental operation. The most important inquiry respecting it is, how it is brought into action. In the exercise of attention are we voluntary or involuntary? Some pieces of intelligence are so touching that they fix our attention instantly, and rivet it in defiance of ourselves; while there are subjects, on the other hand, to which we attend, if at all, under a sense of duty, or perhaps

* See especially Professor Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind.

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of advantage. Attention has in part, therefore, a voluntary character. We can exert it when we think proper, and to what extent we think proper.

By this mechanism is generated our power of self-government. Since the influence of whatever is presented to the mind may be regulated by attention—may be practically annihilated on the one hand, or rendered prevalent on the other—it is plain that we have in our own hands the control of our feelings, actions, and character. Every man is thus put in possession of the key of his own heart, and is enabled to render it a sanctuary for the entertainment of select objects, inviolable, to a great extent, by whatever he may choose to exclude. If we can select the objects which shall occupy the understanding, we can in like manner select those which shall affect the heart, since none can affect the heart but those which occupy the understanding; if we can choose what topics shall impress the heart, we can choose what the state of the heart shall be, since it always corresponds with the topics which stimulate it; and if we can choose what the state of the heart shall be, we can equally fix our determination and our conduct, since they have an exact conformity with the state of the heart.

Our action being thus under our own control, it assumes a new feature of much interest and importance. It is henceforth voluntary. Up to

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this point we have seen the mind of man acting as it has been acted upon, repeating in its varied exercises neither more nor less than the impressions it has received; but, with the element now added, we behold the mind acting of and for itself, by the faculty of voluntary thought excluding and admitting influences at its pleasure, and becoming a primary source of intelligent action. Its action is in a new sense its own. It has now a power of originating action. It is no longer the victim of circumstances, but their lord.

It is necessary here to observe a distinction between those affections of the heart which are subordinate and transient, and its habitually prevailing state. Affections of the former kind are often produced instantaneously, and for the moment uncontrollably, as by tidings of the death of a friend; the latter is the result of cherished and, perhaps, long continued contemplation of objects of a particular class. Such contemplation must inevitably form the prevalent state of mind, and thus in point of fact it is always formed; for so the miser pores over his gold, the imagination of the rake riots in sensual pleasure, the man of science has his thoughts in his lore, and the christian in heaven. When we say that the constitution of man gives him a power of self-control, we refer specifically to the habitual state of his heart. He can make it what he pleases, let him only fix his

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thoughts with corresponding intensity on congenial topics. And thus he has also an ultimate power over those violent and at the moment irresistible emotions to which he is subject; because the lasting influence of the objects which produced them may be modified by that of other considerations selected for this end.

If the faculty of Attention (to use this phraseology) shows us how man may be and do what he pleases, it will equally explain to us why, in so many instances, he is not what the state of things around him is adapted to make him, or why his conduct is so often at variance both with his interest and his duty. This melancholy result arises from inattention to the more serious objects set before him. He sees them, but does not regard them. The perception of them is momentary; they are instantly forgotten, and therefore wholly without influence. It matters not how momentous such things may be in themselves, nor how often they may be exhibited and perceived; if no attention be paid to them, or if the attention they are adapted to excite be withheld, they can exert no power. Trifles lighter than air will outweigh the most solemn topics, if the former be intently dwelt upon and the latter banished from the thoughts.

To this it may be added that inattention is the only method by which things fail to act upon us according to their apparent nature. As it is only by being presented to the understanding, and by

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engaging our attention, that objects have power of acting upon us at all, so, when attention is engaged, their proportionate influence is certain and infallible. As no man can live seriously who does not habitually think of serious things, so no man can live in levity who does. The fixing of the attention determines the character and conduct with irresistible power and infallible certainty.

Before we quit the subject of Attention, it will be proper to advert to the connexion between this exercise of the understanding and the state of the heart. Some things instantly engage more attention than others; why is this? To some things I purposely pay more attention than to others; and why is this? It is plainly because my feelings are more excited towards one object than another. And this is equally the case whether attention be voluntary or involuntary—whether an object fixes my attention by its immediate interest, as tidings of the death of a friend, or whether it engages my attention by my own purpose and effort, as under a sense of duty; a sense of duty being as truly a feeling, or state of the heart, as a sense of pleasure or of grief. Either way feeling is excited, and proportionate to its excitement is the attention engaged.

It is material to remember that attention is voluntary only in part, and in some cases. In others it is altogether involuntary, as when arising

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from the influence of objects which powerfully interest the feelings. Here no purpose is formed to attend to them; yet the attention may be even rivetted for a time, in defiance of our most strenuous efforts. It is important to bear this in mind, because it shows how attention may be awakened in the first instance without any option of ours, and so become the impulse of further feeling, or the object of designed regulation.

V. As far as we have hitherto regarded the structure and operation of the mind, we have found it adapted to produce a species of action and feeling which is intelligent, and accordant with the apparent nature of things. We have found also that man has a power of regulating his feelings and conduct, whether according to the apparent nature of things or not; inasmuch as the power of giving attention to things in various degrees modifies the influence they are adapted to exert, and virtually alters their properties as apparent *to him*. But there is a further quality of our actions to which we must now advert. Man is capable of doing RIGHT or WRONG; or, which is the same thing, of being right or wrong in what he does. This cannot be said of the brute creation. Take, for example, a lion or a bear, which, though they may revel in the blood of other beasts, or even in that of man, are charged with no crime: yet, if a man were to do the same with his fellow-man, we

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should hold him subject to blame. What is the ground of this difference?

It is simply this. The mind of man is adapted to the perception of moral truths, that is, of the good or evil properties of actions. He is capable of understanding that some things are wrong and others right. Sometimes he infers this for himself, sometimes he imbibes the notion from others, in both cases perhaps with considerable inaccuracy; but, let this be as it may, the ideas thus acquired are treasured up in the memory, and constantly brought into use in the way of forming a judgment both of others and ourselves. This perception of moral qualities, and even the formation of moral judgments, is no way dependent upon our choice. We do it whether we will or not, and with irresistible force, although the degree of attention we choose to give to the process may vary. This capacity of estimating actions according to a scale of good or evil, and this propensity in every case so to estimate them, consitute together what is called the CONSCIENCE of man, which is no other than the understanding in this particular aspect and occupation.

Hence it is manifest how in any voluntary action a man may be right or wrong. While he is contemplating it, and before he has determined respecting it, his own mind passes a judgment upon it, and pronounces it to be either the one or the other. If he then does it knowing it to be

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wrong, he is plainly wrong in doing it. So, on the contrary, if his conscience testifies it is right, he is not wrong in that respect; although, if the action be not right in itself, he still may be wrong in not having taken greater pains to ascertain its character.

A similar illustration may be applied to the state of the heart, which a man's conscience equally indicates to be right or wrong, and which, like his outward conduct, he has (as we have just seen) a provision for regulating. Whatever emotions the objects he perceives may excite, a judgment is instantly passed upon them with more or less accuracy expressing their character; and, if he finds improper affections excited, the suppression or the indulgence of them constitutes respectively his right or wrong conduct in such a case.

The additional mechanism by which an agent already intelligent and voluntary comes to be also right or wrong, is at once simple and efficacious. We are so constituted as to know good from evil, and irresistibly to apply our knowledge; in acting according to our knowledge our rectitude, as far as we now speak of it, consists; and hence, with the same limitations, we are right in doing what we perceive to be right, and wrong in doing what we perceive to be wrong.

But we have to go a step further. To right conduct we uniformly attach approbation, and

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blame to that which is wrong. We never doubt the propriety of this in ordinary affairs, and may think it strange to inquire into the grounds of this connexion; yet, as we shall see hereafter, it is important that we should do so. The case is this. We look upon the conduct of men in a thousand instances, and, if we see nothing that strikes us as either right or wrong, we attach to them neither praise nor blame; but the moment we see any thing right we approve of it, or any thing wrong, we condemn. Why should this feature of men's conduct, and only this, induce so peculiar a feeling? Why am I to be any more praised for acting according to my knowledge of right, than according to a perception of sweetness? Or why blamed any more for the indulgence of a feeling which I perceive to be wrong, than for the admiration of what I perceive to be deformed?

It has been common to rest the answer to this question on the force of conscience, which certainly testifies to every man that, whereinsoever he has been either right or wrong, he is deserving of praise or blame accordingly; but, if this testimony of our conscience is true, there must be a ground or reason of its truth, and this reason it is for several causes important to discern. It will add, for example, great force to the testimony of conscience itself; it will tend to check the efforts and to impede the success of men who wish to

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rid themselves of its unwelcome admonitions by subtile but fallacious arguments; and, above all, it will tend to show the justice and the glory of our Maker's ways. We put the case, therefore, we hope fairly; and are quite willing to say, If the testimony of our conscience be unreasonable or untrue, let it be rectified.

Our answer to the inquiry is this. Our perceptions of right and wrong have a very peculiar power. And this in two respects:—in the first place, they make an immediate and inevitable appeal to our choice. We may see many things without either preference or aversion; but the moment we perceive anything to be right or wrong that state of indifference ceases, and we instantly approve or disapprove. So with respect to our own conduct. Innumerable actions might be proposed to us, not one of which we should care to adopt or to decline; but no action could appear to us to be right or wrong without our immediately being led towards a corresponding purpose, either that we would or would not do it. Respecting objects perceived as right or wrong, therefore, our ultimate decision is never involuntary; instantly, and from the very nature of these perceptions, they appeal to us for deliberate approbation or disapprobation, adoption or rejection; and these are voluntary exercises or states of the mind.

In the second place, perceptions of right and

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wrong enter the mind with a force imperative and supreme. They bring with them an immediate sense of obligation. Other things may be agreeable or disagreeable; I may like them or dislike them, and I may pursue or avoid them as I please: but with respect to things right and wrong the case is altogether different. Here is something that I ought to love, that I ought to do; nay, I must do it, or else I shall be wrong; it is binding upon me, nor have I any liberty to decline or to evade it. Now we are so constituted that this sense of obligation always accompanies the perception of any action as right, nor can these two things by any possibility be rent asunder. In addition to this, the sense of obligation is the most powerful of all the feelings of which we are susceptible. We may be attracted by pleasure, by gain, and by various other aspects of things, but to none of these do we feel it binding to yield —we may relinquish them if we please; but what we feel to be right we feel also to be imperative— it may not be left undone. So, on the other hand, we may be deterred by danger, by reproach, and by nameless other unpleasing aspects of things, yet, if we choose, we may encounter them; but, whenever we discover a thing to be wrong, we feel an absolute prohibition of it—it may not be done. The sense of obligation, therefore, being by far the most powerful of all the feelings of which we are susceptible, it may be expected to

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take the lead of them all, and to exercise a supreme directing and controlling influence; and in the course of nature and by its own force it will infallibly do so, unless it is prevented by the interference of some other cause. To this sensibility of obligation all perceptions of right and wrong immediately appeal; an actual sense of obligation is instantly excited by them; and, as this is the strongest of all our feelings, it should of course uniformly prevail. If we suppose a case in which it does not prevail, let us ask why it does not. There is nothing capable of interfering with it but some other feeling, either previously existing, or at the same moment excited. If any such feeling were of superior, or even of equal power, then we might account for the obstruction without imputing blame to the agent; it would rather be referred to his constitution: but as this is not the case, the sense of obligation being the most powerful of all our feelings, here is a stronger feeling overcome by a weaker—the sense of obligation, for example, resisted by the love of pleasure. But how is it that the weaker prevails over the stronger, and that man does not act according to the tendency of his powers? It is plainly because he has been misapplying the voluntary part of them. At the same instant he had a call from duty and from pleasure; he felt that of duty to be the most forcible, yet he lent to it so dull an ear, and listened so eagerly

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to the voice of pleasure, that the feebler inducements of the syren prevailed. By his lending a quicker ear to what he knew to be the least forcible appeal this deviation from rectitude has been produced, and for this he is held to be deserving of blame.

The argument thus far may be summed up as follows:—We receive moral perceptions, and apply these to our own conduct; each moral perception calls upon us instantly to choose, and creates a conscious obligation to choose aright; this is the most influential feeling we are capable of, and has nothing to oppose it but a variety of weaker ones; our Maker, therefore, expects that it should prevail; and if it does not, it will be only because, by means of attention or inattention which we know to be disproportionate to the respective objects, we give greater strength to the feebler cause. We wilfully originate the evil, and the whole blameworthiness of it deservedly falls upon ourselves.

That this natural imperativeness and supremacy of the sense of obligation is not only a reasonable foundation of praise and blame, but that also on which these are universally awarded, will readily appear from a reference to matters of common life. Suppose yourself a parent interrogating a child who has been disobedient. You ask him, "Why did you strike your brother?" "He provoked me." "But ought you to have yielded to the

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provocation?" "No." "Ought you not to have controlled your anger?" "Yes." "Then you have been very wrong, and I am displeased with you." Both parent and child feel this argument to be perfectly conclusive; but what is at the bottom of it? Plainly this principle, that a sense of duty is in its natural tendency of greater power than any other feeling; and that, therefore, if other feelings are not controlled by it, it is not only a fault in itself, but *our* fault, inasmuch as it results from a wilful misapplication of our self-regulating powers. The same principle is at the foundation of all blame or praise.

If any person should be disposed to push the question a step further back, and to say, My conduct is produced by my feelings, and these are produced by the things presented to my mind, which I discern involuntarily, so that *I cannot help* feeling as I do, nor therefore acting as I do—should a man say this, we meet him by admitting at once, that, if this statement is true, he is free from blame. Most certainly all ill-desert is to be traced back to the state of the heart, which is the sole impulse of action and seat of character. Let a man only prove that he cannot help his feelings, and he will clear himself from all censure. But this is far from being the fact. Suppose we take the case of a man already in a state of wrong feeling, as of ingratitude, for example: he is con-

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ceived to say that he cannot help it; but we ask, Has he come to this state of feeling without a wrong use of his voluntary powers? He has surely at some time heard the admonition within him that he ought to be thankful: what attention did he pay to it? Did he inquire whether he was duly thankful, or how his gratitude should be properly expressed? Or did he turn his attention to some other objects, and abandon the duty of gratitude to forgetfulness? No doubt he has taken the latter course, thus making himself unthankful when he could have helped it.

We do not scruple to express our belief that, in whatsoever instance or degree the state of the heart may be wrong, it arises solely from wilful inattention to what would have influenced it aright. If we had given as much attention to every topic as we perceived to be its due, and our state of feeling had then been wrong, it would have been hard to be found fault with; but, if we have been less attentive to some of these topics than we know we ought to have been, and more attentive to others, by thus making a selection of the objects which shall operate upon us we have moulded the state of our hearts according to our own choice, and we are therefore justly responsible for its character. Whatever it may be, it is such as we have wilfully made it, by designedly dwelling on the topics under the influence of which it

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has been formed, to the exclusion of others which would have given it a different complexion.

It may be said, perhaps, that this selection of topics by which a wrong state of mind is induced may be made under the influence of feelings which had arisen involuntarily. Some of our feelings are doubtless involuntary; but it is to be observed that these immediately become subject to our moral judgment, by which they are pronounced to be either right or wrong; and if wrong, then follows an instant sense of obligation to suppress or rectify them. This sense of duty we have already shown to be stronger than every other mental stimulus, so that there can be no excuse for the indulgence or continuance of a wrong feeling in the heart, and none, therefore, for its further influence in engaging attention to improper objects. If a wrong feeling be instantly and perseveringly resisted, as we know it ought to be, it will lead to no evil.*

* The influence of attention in leading to what is voluntary in cases in which itself is involuntary, seems to facilitate our conception of the mode in which sin might come into existence in a holy being. Whatever interests the feelings tends to engage our attention involuntarily, and therefore not sinfully; but, without care, it may be engaged unduly, or disproportionately. Disproportionate attention, however, produces disproportionate or improper feeling, and so commences the progress of sin. Our first parent, for example, saw that the tree was good for food, and a tree to be desired to make one wise. This was true, nor was it wrong that it should be interesting to her; nor, being interesting, could it fail of engaging her attention in a measure. But her

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If the objector should say—But, feeling as I do, I cannot act otherwise, since my feelings determine my conduct—we allow it. But we reply, You ought to feel otherwise; and, however far gone you may be in evil disposition, it needs even now nothing more than a due consideration of all the topics presented to you to change your whole state of mind, and to produce within you a right spirit.

For it should be observed, in conclusion, that God in his infinite wisdom has so arranged the circumstances in which we are placed, that, if a due regard be paid to *all* the objects presented to our understanding, the state of the heart will infallibly be right. He has adapted the causes in operation to the nature upon which they were to operate, just as mechanical forces are proportioned to the machinery on which they are to act. Were not this the case, the whole world of morals would be thrown into disorder. To expect in us a right state of heart, when a due consideration of all things open to our observation was adapted to produce a wrong one, could not be otherwise than unreasonable; and it must be to the full as unreasonable to complain of such an expectation,

attention was engaged disproportionately, and she neglected other considerations; hence undue attention excited undue desire, and the indulgence of this desire was sin. Had it been as soon repelled as the voice of conscience pronounced it wrong, Eve had come unhurt from the power of the tempter.

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when nothing more than a due consideration of known or discernible truths is requisite to its fulfilment. No further than we neglect such consideration does God condemn us; and as far as we do surely we cannot pretend to justify ourselves.

The author should apologise, perhaps, for occupying his readers so long with topics which may possibly be called metaphysical and abstruse; if, however, they have done him the kindness to accompany him attentively, he hopes they will not fail to derive an advantage which will amply recompense their labour. Should a single perusal not have enabled any one to master the subject, a second may do much to diminish the difficulty, or may probably overcome it altogether. We shall hereafter find how necessary a clear view of the elements of mental and moral philosophy is to a proper understanding of the questions to which we are approaching, and how decisively the principles which have been stated bear upon the chief points of the controversy. If we seem as yet to have made no progress, it is only because it is much better to determine our general principles apart from any reference to the particular subject to which they are to be applied. A little further extension of the reader's patience is requested in the perusal of the following chapter.

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CHAP. II.

Definitions.

After the brief exhibition given in the preceding chapter of the elementary truths relating to the intelligent and moral nature of man, it may be important to put down a few definitions of terms relating to them; both that we may the more clearly know what they mean when they occur, and that precision in their use may aid the accuracy and conclusiveness of our reasonings. They will often, indeed, of themselves, decide points which have been long and laboriously disputed.

DISPOSITION, INCLINATION, AFFECTIONS.

Terms of definite import are very desirable for the various states of feeling, or excitements of the heart. The habitually cherished and prevalent state of the heart in any respect, we call the disposition of a man in that respect. It differs from inclination, which is not necessarily either habitual or prevailing; it may be neither. It differs also from affections, which are occasional, temporary, and subordinate states of feeling. It differs, lastly, from will, which we conceive to mean either simply a determination, or the faculty of determining; it is not a state of feeling at all.

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POWER, ABILITY.

Another term of great importance in the ensuing discussion is power, or ability; and it is indispensable to have a settled opinion respecting it before we proceed further. When may it be said that a man has power to perform a given action? To this we answer without hesitation, when he possesses the means of doing so. Let the definition be tried by examples. My power to walk consists in having the free use of my limbs; that is, in possessing the means of walking. My power to think consists in having the use of a sane understanding; that is, in possessing the means of thinking. My power to pay my debts consists in having sufficient property for this purpose; that is, in possessing the means of paying them. My power to be sorrowful consists in having a heart susceptible of being affected by saddening considerations; that is, in possessing the means of being sorrowful.

Is anything else necessary to constitute power, besides the possession of means? And if so, what is it?

This question is put the more pointedly, because we shall have proceeded but a very few steps before the definition of power above given will be objected to by some readers, and something else will be deemed essential to it; we beg

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to suggest, however, that, if any objection be made, it should be made now, and not be brought out just when the pressure of the argument may be most severely felt, and when it can scarcely fail to have the appearance and effect of an evasion. What more, we again ask, is necessary to constitute power, than the possession of means?

Is our having a disposition towards any action essential to, or identical with, our having power to perform it? This is a critical question, with which we shall find ourselves involved hereafter, and one which it will be much better to settle now, without asking which side of the argument it will favour.

Suppose a case for illustration. A man is in full health, at perfect liberty, and with employment before him, but he is idle: has he power to work? Another has sufficient money to satisfy his creditors, but he is fond of gaming, and has no disposition to meet them: has he power to pay his debts? A rich man is importuned by a sufferer, but he is covetous: has he power to relieve the petitioner? In all these cases we conceive an affirmative answer must be immediately returned; yet they are cases in which disposition is wanting, and they lead to the conclusion, therefore, that disposition is *not* the same as power, or necessary to it.

Or conceive it to be granted for the sake of argument, that disposition is power, or is essential

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to it. Then it will follow, that what a man is not disposed to do he has no power to do. Though a man be rolling in wealth, a love of dissipation destroys his power to pay his debts; though he be in full vigour, idleness annihilates his power to work; and it is only necessary to go great lengths in these bad dispositions to authorize any one to say, I am unable either to pay your bills, or to labour for my bread! A person who should use such language as this would be deemed a fit inmate for a lunatic asylum. Nothing is more common, and few things are more important, than the distinction between power and inclination. You can but you will not, is language almost incessantly used, and the distinction on which it is founded is the basis of some very important transactions; as when an idle fellow is sent to the treadmill, or an able but reluctant debtor to the prison.

To say that disposition is, or is essential to power, is to attach a very extraordinary limitation to the idea of power itself. I have no power, I am told, to do anything that I am not disposed to do; yet there are an immense number of things which I am not disposed to do, which I have been always used to think I *could* do. For instance, I am surrounded by several hundred places, and am not disposed to go to any of them; but have I therefore no power to go to any of them? In that case I must be consi-

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dered as fixed, like a rock, to my position, till I am disposed to move, with which disposition to move, it appears, my power of moving is identical. On the contrary, the obvious fact is that we have power to do many things, whether we are disposed to do them or not. The things are but few, in comparison, which we are disposed to do; and these are selected at our pleasure out of the much larger number which we have power to do. The state of the disposition has not the slightest connexion with the question of power.

It cannot but seem strange that such an idea as we have been noticing should ever have been entertained. It has apparently arisen from an erroneous view of the fact, that a disposition to act is necessary to the performance of an action; whence it has been hastily concluded to be necessary also to the power of performing it. Nothing certainly can be more obvious, than that a voluntary being *will* never act further than he feels a disposition to do so. Though I may take a journey whenever I please, so long as I am determined not to do so, it is quite certain that I shall not; yet one would think it equally plain that my power of doing it is not impaired by this certainty. To imagine that whatever is necessary to the performance of anything is also necessary to the power of performing it, is to overlook the difference that exists between power and performance, which, being diverse in

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themselves, do not imply the same requisites. The mistake has probably been confirmed by not properly interpreting a familiar form of speech. We sometimes say of a confirmed miser that he cannot give; or of an habitual drunkard that he cannot refrain from the cup; or of ourselves when we have determined to do one thing, that we cannot do the contrary. Into the full force of this language we shall inquire in a subsequent chapter; at present it may be sufficient to observe, that it is very commonly employed, as it is obviously in these cases, to express willingness or unwillingness, without any reference to power at all.

There are clearly two very distinct states before us: namely, the possession of means to perform a given action, *with* a disposition to employ them; and the possession of the same means for the same action, *without* a disposition to employ them. The question is, which of these two states are we to call power. In all ordinary cases the latter is called power; and we are willing to adopt this nomenclature rigidly through the whole discussion. If any person should insist in giving the name power only to the former of these states, doubtless he would evade the following argument, but he would also needlessly depart from the common, and therefore the only intelligible use of the term, while he would leave the latter very important

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state altogether without a name. This would merely necessitate the construction of a new term, before he individually could be pursued through the perverse intricacies of his course.

We are quite ready to admit that a disposition towards an action seems to render the doing of it easy, and that a contrary disposition seems to render it difficult, sometimes even to impossibility. But it only seems to do so. By the terms easy and difficult, in this connexion, we understand only that actions are more or less welcome or pleasing to us, as must inevitably be the case in proportion as we are more or less willing or unwilling to perform them. It is manifest, however, that our power to perform an action is not at all affected by its being more or less agreeable to us. We are fully able to do some things which, nevertheless, we deeply abhor, and quite unable to do other things the accomplishment of which would give us great delight; so that, after all, though aversion may prevent action, it has no tendency to diminish power. However loath I may be to satisfy my creditors, even if I should be so reluctant as to make me feel it difficult, and even impossible, yet, as long as I have the means of doing so, I shall be held by all men of common sense to have the power.

Too much time, perhaps, has been spent upon this point, yet its importance required that it should be cleared up. If the reader feels satis-

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fied respecting it, let him set it down as an axiom not hereafter to be disputed, that power consists in the possession of means; and that, although a man certainly never will do a thing without a disposition to do it, yet, by the possession of means alone he becomes fully able to do it, whether he will or not. If he should not feel satisfied with this conclusion, let him reconsider the subject, put his objections into a tangible form, and resolutely come to some definition of power by which he may be willing to abide, before he proceeds to the argument in which it will be employed.

FREEDOM, OR LIBERTY OF MORAL AGENTS.

A third term which it may be desirable to define is freedom, or liberty, in its application to man as a moral agent. Much may hereafter depend upon the meaning we attach to these words.

By freedom, in a general view, we mean simply the absence of constraint; a state in which powers of every kind may act according to their nature without impediment. Thus the parts of a machine may be said to be free, when not obstructed in following the impulse of its moving power; so, in respect of the body, we have freedom when our motions are not coerced; and, in like manner, as intelligent beings, we enjoy free-

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dom, when the faculties of understanding, feeling, determination, and attention, can all be exerted according to their nature without obstruction.

Now man, as a moral being, is no other than an intelligent being acting under the perception of moral truths; so that his freedom as a moral agent consists in the unobstructed action of his intelligent faculties, and in this alone: nor can it consist in anything else, since there do not exist any other powers than these to be the instruments of his moral action.

The writer is not unaware how strenuously it has been urged that some other kind of freedom must pertain to moral agents, such as a freedom of the will or a right disposition, of which he has perhaps said enough in another place.* The indulgence of such fancies is, in all probability, to be referred to that fruitful source of error which we have already noticed, the misinterpretation of analogical terms. Thus, for example, the existence of an evil disposition in men in their fallen state, and the known certainty of its result in the commission of evil, have led to the use of the words captivity, bonds of iniquity, and others of a similar character; very forcible and significant phraseology, doubtless, and, as metaphorical language, highly appropriate: but it seems to have been forgotten that it *is* meta-

* See p. 54.

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phorical; or, if not, its just interpretation has at all events been disregarded. A man in bonds is not free to act; a man with a prevailing evil disposition is said to be in bonds of iniquity; therefore it is concluded that he is not free to act, and that a right disposition must be necessary to his moral freedom. This is the argument, and it seems, perhaps, conclusive. But in what sense is a man of evil disposition said to be in bonds? Literally, or figuratively? Surely in the latter sense alone. And what is the analogy on which the use of this metaphor is founded? Simply this, that, as a man who is in bonds will certainly not perform a given action, so a man who, although he is not in bonds, is ill-disposed, will with equal certainty not perform another given action. And this is all. The metaphor means nothing as to the actual want of freedom, because in this respect the cases are not analogous; but it denotes only the certainty of a specific line of conduct: it does not follow from the use of such language, therefore, however appropriate, that evil disposition constitutes an actual bondage, or that right disposition is necessary to freedom. Moral freedom can consist in nothing more than the freedom of the powers by which moral actions are wrought; and these powers are nothing more than the intelligent faculties of man. If there are any other, let them now for the first time be announced and described. Notwithstanding all

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that may be said of bondage, therefore, and allowing to this and other metaphors their full force, we do not scruple to maintain that moral freedom has nothing whatever to do with the disposition; but that, in this respect, a devil is as free as an angel, and the most wicked man as free as the most holy.

RECTITUDE, DEPRAVITY.

One more set of terms it is important to define. Wherein consists the rectitude, and wherein the depravity of human nature? Few words are more often used in the discussion than the latter of these, and a precise idea of its import will greatly facilitate the accuracy and value of its application.

We have stated that good and evil in man consist essentially in the state of the heart. Rectitude, therefore, which is a comprehensive name for whatever may be good in man, is primarily applicable to a state of the heart, and denotes a right state of it, or a right disposition. Depravity, consequently, can be neither more nor less than a wrong disposition, or a wrong state of the heart.

It is true, the other faculties of the mind are represented as depraved, and they do all of them, in fact, feel the pernicious influence of sin; but they do so only in a secondary and

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indirect manner, through the medium of the heart, on which the deteriorating effect of iniquity primarily and immediately fell. My understanding, for example, is depraved; that is, it does not now act aright in the apprehension and retention of divine things: but why? Not through any diminished competency to act as the instrument of perception, but through the influence of an evil disposition, which affects, not its condition, but its exercise. The depravity of the understanding, therefore, is but a branch of that of the heart, in which the root of the evil is planted, and the bitter fruits are borne in every department of the man.

If any should conceive that depravity destroys, or even weakens our powers of action, it will be desirable for them to recollect what these powers are. We have shown that they are no other than our intelligent faculties; the question therefore is, whether a wrong disposition destroys or weakens the intelligent faculties. That it perverts them in actual use we allow, and that it sometimes leads to sinful courses which weaken, or even destroy them; but it must be allowed on the other hand, we think, that the intelligent faculties are not directly destroyed, or even weakened, by a wrong disposition. Wicked men have still the use of their reason, and some of them have it in a pre-eminently powerful degree, though associated with dispositions evil enough to ally

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them with infernal beings. In whatever degree, or from whatever cause, the rational faculties are impaired, in an equal degree we most readily admit our power to be diminished.

The perplexity and difficulty which have been thrown into discussions such as those which are now before us, by the use of ill-adapted or ill-defined phraseology, or by neglecting to distinguish the strict from the analogical use of words, must be the author's apology for dwelling so long on these introductory matters. When a subject is either intricate in itself, or has become so through unskilful management, nothing is more conducive to its successful investigation than definitions and distinctions. In these, indeed, the very crisis of the argument lies. The differences that occur in the details of it frequently throw the disputants back upon more general topics; so that, until these are understood and agreed upon, the course of reasoning is perpetually broken, and can never be satisfactorily prosecuted. The author intends and hopes to use all his principal terms strictly in the meaning he has assigned to them, and to adhere rigidly to the principles of moral and mental philosophy which he has laid down. Such of his readers as may concur with him in these will form agreeable companions to him in his course, and he has a cheerful hope of gaining their acquies-

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cence in his conclusions; but to what purpose should any go further who dissent from these axioms? To such readers his reasonings must always appear fallacious, and objections will continually throw us back on points which should have been previously determined. The decision of the religious argument is involved in the principles of moral philosophy from which we set out. Those who may differ from the author upon these he requests to proceed no further, but to apply their thoughts to the reconsideration of them; for, if the difference should be irreconcilable here, it would be sure to be so everywhere else, and it would be better to part at once with mutual expressions of candour and good-will, than to prolong a discussion which may irritate, but cannot convince. Should readers of this class choose to continue their perusal of this little work, he hopes they will do him, not the favour, but the justice, to recollect the sense he has given to his own terms; that, at all events, whatever they may think of his arguments they may judge fairly of his consistency. If any should prefer passing by the general argument altogether, the author will meet them again with pleasure in subsequent chapters, on the plain and decisive ground of scripture testimony.

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CHAP. III.

Whether man in his natural state has power to repent: —The argument from the nature of the case.

AFTER these explanations, we come to the question before us: namely, whether, in harmony with the admitted necessity of the Spirit's influence, it can be maintained that man has power to repent without his aid.

Let it be distinctly remembered, that we affirm man to have no disposition to repent, but, on the contrary, a prevailing aversion to it; but, according to the definition we have given, power is altogether different from disposition, and implies nothing respecting it. It is simply the possession of means, which is compatible with disposition of any kind.

The question, therefore, comes to this: What are the means necessary to repentance, or to effect an entire change of mind towards God?

They are, first, the opportunity of becoming acquainted with truths adapted and sufficient to produce such a change. For the consideration of suitable topics is the only method of effecting a change of any kind in our disposition, nor can a change be reasonably expected further than adequate reasons are shown for it.

Secondly, a state of the understanding physi-

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cally sound, competent to discern and weigh the true import of the matters presented for consideration.

Thirdly, A regular connexion between the understanding and the heart, so that there may be no obstruction to the influence of the truths discovered and contemplated.

These appear to be all the means necessary to repentance; and it may safely be affirmed that, under these conditions, consideration would infallibly produce it. If it would not, it must be either, 1, because the reasons presented were insufficient; or, 2, because the understanding could not discern and estimate them; or, 3, because, when discerned and weighed, they were not influential on the heart: all which things are contrary to the suppositions made. If motives adequate to change the heart produce their just influence, it is plain that the heart will be changed. It requires to be shown, therefore, whether the conditions enumerated meet in the case of a sinner or not.

First, then, has the Most High presented to a sinner just and sufficient reasons for repenting? We are thrown here on the entire body of moral and evangelical truth, upon all that God has said respecting the foundations of duty, the force of obligation, the criminality and consequences of sin, and the grace and glory of his gospel. When we ask whether a sinner may not find

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here good and sufficient reasons why he should mourn over his iniquities and forsake them, we feel as though the very question involved impiety.

Secondly, Is the understanding of man capable of discerning and weighing the true import of the statements presented to him? Undoubtedly it is, if he be sane. If any malady impairs his rational faculties, the excuse is valid; but nothing more than sane rational faculties is necessary to understand and reflect upon the word of God. To receive it, or to feel delight in it, indeed, is not to be ascribed to a natural man; but these phrases indicate either a right state of heart, or the engagement of the understanding under a right state of heart; and they imply that which we contend for, namely, the faculty of previously discerning the import of the divine word, because, without this, it could neither be received nor rejected.

Thirdly, Is there any such derangement in the faculties of man, that the heart does not now yield to the force of objects entertained by the understanding? We know that it exhibits more sensibility to some objects than to others, but the fact that it feels the force of any is a proof that the faculty still exists unimpaired; while the circumstance that it does not feel equally or duly the force of all, is fairly to be accounted for by inattention to some topics and a preference of others. Let the case be examined, amd it will

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be found that the heart is still, as truly and as forcibly as ever, affected by the objects which occupy the understanding, in proportion to the intensity with which they are regarded.

The means of repentance, therefore, and all the means of repentance, are possessed by a sinner without the Spirit; but the possession of the means of repentance constitutes the power of repentance; therefore a sinner has power to repent.

It might be here said, that, if a disposition to repent be necessary to actual repentance, it ought to be considered as a part of the power. This is just a specimen of the way in which the argument is liable to be interrupted by objections arising from its pressure at particular points; but it is sufficient to say that the meaning of our terms is already settled, and we cannot vary.* If it is still to be debated what power is, the reader is in reality advanced no further than the 53rd page of this little volume, and would do much better to return to it.

CHAP. IV.

Whether, in the conversion of a sinner, power is imparted:—The argument from the work of the Spirit.

HAVING seen the condition of man without the Holy Spirit, let us now observe him under the

* See page 53.

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influence of this divine agent, and endeavour to ascertain the nature of the work which he accomplishes in the heart. We have called it generally, the conversion of a sinner to God; but what is the conversion of a sinner to God? Or, when the Holy Spirit produces the conversion of a sinner to God, what does he produce? The question may seem too simple to be so carefully put, but we shall hereafter find it greatly to our advantage to have formed clear ideas on it.

Now the actual conversion of a sinner presents many details; such as an extensive change of his views of divine things; a variety of emotions, and often of conflicting emotions, in his bosom; a total change of his principles and preferences; and a corresponding change in his conduct and pursuits. It is manifest, however, that in all this there is one grand and leading feature, one principal point of change, to which the rest are subordinate; we mean the change of the disposition, or of the habitually prevalent state of the heart. The change in the views is the means of producing this change of heart, without which a mere change of views would be of no advantage; from this change of heart springs the change of conduct, which could otherwise have no consistency or permanency; while the various and conflicting emotions which arise are the mere accidents of the change, modified by the previous state of the mind, and by the considerations

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chiefly instrumental in transforming it. In a word, then, that which the Holy Spirit produces in the conversion of a sinner, is essentially a change in the habitually prevalent state of his heart.

This may be easily illustrated. The state of a sinner's heart towards God while carnal is declared to be enmity (Rom. viii. 7); when converted it is love (Col. i. 21); and the conversion of a sinner consists in the accomplishment of this change. Once he hated God, now he seeks his friendship; once he avoided the Lord's ways, now he chooses them; once he delighted in sin, now it is his burden; once he lived far from God, now he desires his constant presence. This change is what the Holy Spirit produces when he effects the conversion of a sinner.

It may be added, that this is the principal result of the Spirit's work. In one view it is an ultimate result, to which the enlightening of the mind and the various exercises connected with it are conducive, and in leading to which their entire value consists; while in another view it is an initiatory effect, from which alone any true holiness or transformation of life can proceed, and by which it is secured. It is, in a word, the sum of true religion, which is accordingly declared to consist in having a new heart (Ezek. xviii. 31; xxxvi. 26); the restoration of man to essential rectitude, and to the image of God. To

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maintain this change, and to give it a uniform and universal influence, is the whole scope of the Spirit's operation.

The next point requiring observation, is the method in which this grand change in the state of the heart is produced. To an inquiry upon this subject the answer is ready and obvious; it is produced by a change of views in reference to divine things. A sinner does not begin to love God, whom he once hated, without having some new ideas of his excellency; nor to hate sin, which he once loved, without some discoveries of its criminality. In order to convert the heart, the blessed Spirit enlightens the eyes; and hence he is represented as accomplishing his work by the instrumentality of the word of truth, Psalm xix. 7, 8; James i. 18; Eph. i. 18. The use and end of the change of views which always takes place in conversion, is that by them the heart may be transformed.

The views by which this change is produced, however, are in one respect far from being new; since they are only such as are contained in the sacred scriptures, and such as, in many cases, have been often presented to the mind before. What causes them now to produce a new effect? And what does the Holy Spirit do in order to give them this unusual efficacy? He induces a sinner to attend to them, and thus ensures their influence. Thus it is said that "the Lord opened

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Lydia's heart, that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul," Acts xvi. 14.

The author is very desirous that his readers should fully satisfy themselves before they advance, whether the preceding is an accurate and scriptural account of the conversion of a sinner to God. If any of them should conceive that there is any further change produced in conversion, he entreats them to ask what it is, and not to satisfy themselves without a clear and intelligible idea of it.

If the preceding view of conversion be correct, it is manifest that the Holy Spirit acts herein in conformity with the intelligent constitution of man, as it has been already described. In all this process there is nothing extraordinary but the originating impulse; in all other respects it is precisely what takes place in every change of the feelings, and the very method by which a thousand changes in them are wrought every day. Here is the understanding dwelling upon certain truths, and the heart influenced accordingly. The extraordinary thing is that a man is come to dwell upon truths which he once banished from his thoughts; but this, it is plain, makes no difference in the truths themselves, nor in the state of the faculties which he employs upon them. Here is no change of power, but simply a different employment of the power which has been always possessed.

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It appears, therefore, that, whatever the state of man as to power may be before he is influenced by the Holy Spirit, it is the same afterwards, inasmuch as the work of the Spirit makes no difference in this respect. He imparts no power, but merely sets in motion existing powers by an extraordinary impulse; so that, on this ground also, the power of turning to God must be admitted to exist without his influence.

If it should be suggested that the impulse thus given should be called power, we have only again to refer to our definition, which we are very willing to alter if any of our readers will show cause; but from which, until then, every consideration forbids us to depart.

CHAP. V.

Whether the possession of power is not involved in the praise and blameworthiness of actions:—the argument from the nature of sin.

THE actions and character of men are familiarly spoken of in terms which convey either censure or commendation. Similar epithets are likewise employed by God himself upon similar subjects. Hence he speaks continually of righteousness and of sin. The conduct of men in an unconverted state he charges upon them as highly criminal;

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that is to say, the conduct from which the Holy Spirit, in conversion, causes them to turn away, he severely condemns. Now, familiar as this kind of language is, it carries with it an idea strictly and powerfully applicable to our present purpose. For, if an action, or rather the person by whom it is performed, be justly considered as worthy of praise or blame, it must be because there is some peculiar feature in his conduct, giving occasion to, and having a correspondence with, this peculiar view of it. The actions of volcanoes and whirlwinds are neither praised nor blamed, neither are those of brutes; why should those of men be so?

To deserved blame or condemnation several conditions are required; but the only one necessary to be here noticed, is the possession of power over our actions. This is uniformly and absolutely essential. If, for example, a man is praised that he did not go to a gaming-house, and it is found that at the time he was confined in a prison, the ground of the praise awarded him is taken away. That which renders a person praiseworthy in the doing of good actions is his doing them voluntarily, that is, of his own choice, and when, therefore, he might have done otherwise. In like manner, it is essential to blameworthiness that a man should have power to avoid an action, as well as to perform it. If your servant, for instance, has injured

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your property, you hold him criminal because of the apparent voluntary nature of the act; but, if it could be satisfactorily proved to you that it was involuntary, and not through carelessness merely, but by some external force which he had not the means of resisting, you would immediately alter your opinion, and clear him from censure. Every man feels that, when a fault is charged upon him, he makes a good and irrefragable defence if he can say truly, I could not help it—I did all I had power to do. A person who should persist in attaching blame when this was clearly proved, would infallibly be considered as blinded by passion; and such a censure would soon become light to those who might have to bear it, inasmuch as it would be consciously and manifestly undeserved.

Let these illustrations be applied to the case before us. We argue thus, using for convenience the syllogistic form: God blames man for not being conformed to his will; but God blames no man unjustly; therefore, whatever is necessary to just blame must be found in the condition of man. The conclusion of this syllogism forms the first member of the next:—Whatever is necessary to just blame is found in the condition of man; but power over our actions is necessary to just blame; therefore, man has power over his actions.

Which of these positions or conclusions will

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be disputed the author cannot tell. To him it appears that the possession of power to do right is essential to the very possibility of doing wrong, and that, if man does not possess it, he can be guilty of no sin.

The opinion that blameworthiness towards God is a different thing from blameworthiness towards men, is without foundation. There is, and can be, but one set of ideas suggested to our minds by this phrase and its kindred terms, sin, righteousness, condemnation, &c.; among these ideas that of the possession of power is always found, and it is inseparable from the rational use of the terms themselves. That God has used these terms knowing what meaning they conveyed to us, and knowing too that they could convey no other, is a fair argument that he intended them to convey these ideas; if he did not so intend them, it would have been but reasonable that he should have given us his own explanation of them; and, if he has done neither the one nor the other, then he has left us altogether in the dark as to the meaning of his own words, with the additional evil of a powerful tendency to understand them in an inapplicable sense of our own. Will any friend of God be pleased with this alternative? Either he has thus uselessly spoken, or he has used words in their ordinary meaning; and if he has done the latter, the use of the words, sin, condemnation,

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&c. essentially implies the existence of the power contended for.

It has been said, that no doubt can be entertained by any man of his sinfulness, because his own conscience convicts him of it. This is true, and it bears directly upon the argument in hand; for the very reason why a man's conscience convicts him of sin is, that it also assures him of his power to avoid it. To this extent he always feels himself subject to blame, but no further. Persuade a man that in any given instance he has not the power of acting otherwise, and you immediately free him from all self-accusation in that respect. Hence there has arisen so marked a distinction as to the kinds of conduct for which men blame or justify themselves respectively. If a man commits a fraud he reproaches himself for it, for he feels it was a deliberate villany; but if he breaks into a rage, he says (though unjustly) I could not help it, it is my constitution—and he takes no blame. If you represent to him the state of his heart towards God, and attach censure there, you find that he uses the same weapon of defence with still greater force :—O! says he, that is natural to me, I cannot help that. A thousand such examples might be adduced, but these are sufficient to show that the reproofs of conscience are founded upon the conscious possession of power; and that, to whatever extent a man is really per-

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suaded that he has not power to act differently, to the same extent he inevitably exempts himself from blame.

Some persons have satisfied themselves with saying, that men must feel themselves blameworthy, because they know they have sinned freely, or voluntarily. True; but what purpose does this statement serve? Suppose that men have this opinion of themselves; it must be either just, or unjust. If just, it must be founded on their power to act otherwise, which is essential to voluntary action, and which is all we have contended for; if unjust, it is only a fallacy of which they ought to be disabused. And what is the meaning, besides, of sinning, or doing anything else, voluntarily? It is to select one out of several things, any of which we might have chosen. If I have not power to act otherwise than I do, my actions are not free but constrained.

It would, after all, be much more candid, if those who maintain that man has not power to avoid sin, would acknowledge that, according to their principle, the sinner loses his criminal character. They have excellent authority for doing so, no less than that of our Lord and Saviour himself. "If ye were blind," said he to the Pharisees, "ye should have no sin," John ix. 41: in other words, If you had not the means of doing right, you should not be charged with doing wrong. And, if this is the

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principle on which HE proceeds in the distribution of blame, why should *we* be discontented with it? It is impossible to admit that sin is no fault, since the sentiment would subvert the whole fabric of the divine government, and turn the oracles of eternal wisdom into foolishness; then let the untenable notion of man's inability, which plainly involves this consequence, be at once, cordially, and for ever abandoned.

Some divines have shown so much candour as to allow this consequence in part. Admitting the general principle that God blames men for not doing only what they could do, and not what they could not do, and conceiving that men cannot do anything spiritually, but only externally good, they hold that men are not blamable for not doing spiritual things, such as believing in Christ.

It is pleasant to see the force of truth confessed in any measure by antagonists in argument, and we may fairly set this concession down as no trifling confirmation of the principle we have maintained, namely, that blameworthiness is commensurate with power. But to what an extraordinary position have our brethren thus been driven! There is nothing blameable in any spiritual wickedness, they affirm, because man has no power to do anything spiritually good. By things spiritually good or evil, we suppose we are to understand things good or evil in dis-

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position, or in the state of the heart; so that the idea entertained is, that there is no blameworthiness in any state of the heart, however evil. Wonderful conception! Nothing blameable in pride, lust, hatred, malice, revenge, love of sin, enmity to God, contempt of salvation, rejection of Christ, or in any of the dreadful evils of heart which might be added to the catalogue! What then is the bible, but a mass of awful fictions, falsely representing that on account of these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience? Is it not strange too, that, while there is no blameworthiness in these inward evils, there should be so much in the outward expression of them? There is harm, it seems, in fornication, but none in lasciviousness; it is censurable to strike a blow, but not so to be in a rage: it is wrong to commit sin, but not so to love it. Yet why should this be? Does not the law of God look into the inmost soul, and require purity there? Has not our Lord declared that whoso looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart; and the apostle, that whoso hateth his brother is a murderer? Matt. v. 28; 1 John iii. 15. Besides, if these outward acts of iniquity are held to be blameworthy, it must, upon the principles of our brethren themselves, be because they have power to avoid them: but what power has any

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man over his conduct, except by having power over his heart, out of which the conduct actually and inevitably springs? They seem startled by our maintaining that men can regulate their conduct by regulating their dispositions, but really it is we who have the greater cause to wonder, when we find them affirming that a man can regulate his conduct without regulating his dispositions. They would be hard task-masters, if the government of the world were in their hands. The yoke of our Maker is easy indeed in comparison with theirs.

Our readers will probably agree with us in thinking, that nothing can be more futile than the attempt to withdraw spiritual evils, that is, evils of the heart, from deserved blame. And, if they are deserving of blame, upon the principles of those with whom we are arguing, men must have power to avoid them; because, as they allow, God blames us for not doing only what we have power to do. How delightful would it be to find persons of such amiable candour, and of clear views too to a certain extent, scattering, by a vigorous effort, the perplexities which yet surround them!

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CHAP. VI.

Whether the possession of power is not implied in the divine commands: — the argument from moral obligation.

It is an obvious but remarkable circumstance, that the same things which are described as wrought by the Holy Spirit, and as indispensably requiring his influence, are elsewhere made the subject of divine command, and enjoined upon men. "Repent and be converted," said the apostles, Acts iii. 19. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts," said the prophets, Isa. lv. 7. "Come unto me," said the Saviour, Matt. xi. 28. "Wash thy heart from wickedness," said Jehovah, Jer. iv. 14. What are we to understand by this?

The issuing of commands is a thing of perpetual occurrence among men; but it implies always a peculiar condition in order to its propriety. One feature of this condition, and the only one immediately pertaining to our present argument, is, that the power of the persons commanded should be proportionate to the obedience required. This is a point of obvious and indispensable necessity. Whether it may be just or not that any commands at all should be addressed to me from a given quarter, it is at all events unjust that I should be

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commanded beyond my strength. It may be possible that all the power I have should be rightly at the disposal of another; but what would any one have more? Or what could a claim for more result in but absurdity and ridicule? Authority in him who commands, is strictly correlative to power in him who obeys. Who thinks of commanding the dead? Or of requiring the living to do what they have not power to do—the lame to walk, or the deaf to listen?

One would naturally infer, therefore, that when God, as a being of adorable justice, issues his commands, the very fact of his doing so implies an appropriate condition on the part of men, to whom they are addressed; they must have power to do whatever God enjoins upon them. To issue commands under any other circumstances is unjust and absurd, and cannot be ascribed to the most blessed.

Under the force of this obvious inference, some divines, deeming it indispensable to maintain human inability, have been led to abandon the obligation of the divine law; alleging that, as men cannot do what is enjoined, and God knows they cannot, so he does not expect they should; and that the only use of the law is to set forth God's rights and our sinfulness. Such is the force of system! With what eyes can these persons read the bible? The commands

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of God are expressly and directly addressed to men, and they are worded in a way fully expressive of his will and authority: what could he have said more or otherwise, if he had intended them to have been obeyed? But the use of the law, we are told, is to set forth his rights. Yet what rights can he have irrespective of man's power? Rights of moral government are limited essentially to creatures capable of moral action, and can extend no further. Where there are no such creatures (and according to this view there are none upon earth), there no such government can be exercised, nor can any such rights exist.

In order to maintain the strange opinion, that God may justly command when we have not power to obey, it has been a favorite idea with some divines that there is something peculiar about his supremacy, which exempts it from the force of ordinary rules; and it has often been announced with oracular wisdom, as an axiom in a certain school of theology, that God's rights are not to be measured by our ability. We trust we have no desire to limit the Holy One of Israel. We desire to cherish an unfeigned joy in his supremacy and sovereignty. But God has limited himself by the very fact of establishing a moral government, a government of definite rules and principles, which he has shown no desire to violate; and he can feel himself little

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indebted, we apprehend, to those who have advocated his liberty to do so. He means to be a righteous judge; and if so, his commands must be proportionate to our power, whatever that power may be, or may become.

It is of no consequence at all *how* a change may have been wrought in the power possessed by me, whether by means blameable or otherwise, whether by another's conduct or my own, whether augmenting my power or diminishing it: the principle never can be departed from, that, such as my present power is, precisely such is my present obligation.

As to the other alleged use of the law upon the supposition of human inability, this is the strangest of all. It is to exhibit our sinfulness. But, on the above supposition, what sinfulness have I to be exhibited? If I had power, according to Christ's declaration, I should have sin; but, if I have no power, I have no sin: so that, if the law exhibits me as a sinner, it exhibits what is not the fact, and stands in need of correction. To deny, therefore, that the law of God is given and intended as the rule of our obedience, is to deny its utility altogether. If it does not answer this purpose, it answers none; or only the mischievous one of ascribing to God rights which he does not possess, and to man iniquities of which he is not guilty.

It has been imagined by others, that the law

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may be considered as two-fold, an internal and an external law, the letter and the spirit; the one enjoining outward actions, and the other referring to the state of the heart. The latter, or the spiritual part of the law, is supposed not to be addressed to men in a way of command; but only the former, or the outward precepts, which men, it is allowed, have power to fulfil. It is well that men are allowed to have power to do anything that God commands, for so far his ways will appear to be just. But we should like to know on what this distinction in the law is founded. The apostle affirms that the law itself is spiritual; and, although some of its requirements are of an outward kind, it contains many also that are strictly spiritual, and the state of the heart is pre-eminently regarded in all. Such, indeed, is the grand requirement in which the whole law is comprehended: "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself," Mark xii. 30, 31. It would appear also, that, if God may not command the state of the heart, he cannot effectually command anything, inasmuch as all external actions originate and take their character from it. It is in the heart, in truth, as we have already shown, that the right and the wrong of every action essentially lies; and, if God has not aimed his law at the heart, he has passed by the only part of our nature to which it is applicable at all.

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If this were not enough, we should like to know how a man can have power to perform things outwardly right, but not inwardly so. Outward actions are not such as are commanded, unless they are performed in the spirit which is commanded, every precept requiring an internal as well as an external conformity. Besides, there is no way of regulating the outward conduct, but by first regulating the heart. A man's power over his actions consists in his power over his heart; destroy this, and the other instantly expires.

As the very fact of the divine Being issuing his commands seems to demonstrate the existence of a corresponding power of obeying them, so this argument will be greatly strengthened by considering the awful consequences which he attaches to disobedience, a topic to be pursued in the following chapter.

CHAP. VII.

Whether the possession of power be not implied in the distribution of rewards and punishments:—the argument from human responsibility.

We referred at the close of the preceding chapter, to the consequences which it has pleased the Most High to connect with the violation of his commandments. As he has issued a law to be obeyed, so he has appointed a day in which he

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will judge the world, Acts xvii. 31. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every man may receive according to his works, whether they have been good or evil," 1 Cor. v. 10.

This part of the divine administration is evidently pervaded by a general principle of great importance, namely, that God holds men answerable to him for their conduct; and doubtless, if he does so at all, he does so with justice. But, in order to just responsibility, there is required a peculiar and corresponding condition in the parties held responsible. No man holds *all* other men to be responsible to him; why does he hold *any* to be so? Plainly because of some peculiarity in their condition. In such a condition the possession of power is a uniform and essential element. A person may be my servant, and therefore I may consider him answerable to me for the occupation of his time; but, if his capacity of labour is taken away, his responsibility no longer exists. The allotment of praise and blame, of punishment and reward, proceeds universally upon this principle, so far as it is acknowledged to be just; every deviation from it is an admitted instance of partiality, wickedness, or folly.

The application of these remarks to the divine government will lead us to a very easy and obvious conclusion. The Almighty holds men

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responsible to him for their conduct; but power over our own conduct is necessary to just responsibility; therefore men have power over their own conduct.

An imagined necessity of maintaining human inability has induced an unwillingness to admit this reasoning. It is alleged that the subject, like many others, is mysterious, and that we should not pry into such profound investigations.

Undoubtedly many subjects are mysterious, and it is both our duty and our interest not to push inquiry where God checks it. But upon what authority is the responsibility of man ranked among the mysteries of religion?

Certainly no question can be more important, or more conducive to practical purposes, than this:—On what ground does God hold me answerable for my conduct? Nor can there be a question better entitled to a plain and convincing reply. Upon the answer to such an inquiry, the complexion of a ma 's feelings in reflecting upon his own character obviously depends. If the censure which attaches to him be apparently unjust, or if the justice of it be hidden among divine mysteries, he may be assured, indeed, of condemnation before God, but he cannot feel any condemnation of himself. Humiliation, shame, or penite ial sorrow, can spring from nothing but such justice in his condemnation as he himself can understand; and, if these be of any

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excellency or importance, it is equally important, not merely that our responsibility should be just, but that its justice should be apparent to ourselves. A shadow upon this topic darkens every other; since our views of divine mercy, our joy in salvation, our grateful devotedness, all and every part of christian character, will bear a proportion to the justice we discern in our condemnation. It ought, therefore, to be with every man a matter of the utmost anxiety to have clear views on this point. Not that we should be unwilling to leave in mystery what God has placed there, but it is yet to be proved that he has withdrawn the grounds of our responsibility from our cognizance; and, when we think of their obvious and fundamental importance, it may be deemed almost, if not altogether, incredible that he should have done so.

This is the less to be supposed, because responsibility is not by any means a mysterious subject in itself. We are in the habit continually of holding each other responsible, and of allotting most readily both praise and censure, punishment and reward. The principles on which we do this are perfectly simple and obvious; and there is a natural and irresistible tendency to apply them to the divine conduct, as well as to our own. God has made use of our own language in this respect, and has given us reason to suppose, therefore, that he entertains similar

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ideas, and acts on similar principles; otherwise his declarations are calculated to mislead. If, when he speaks of righteous judgment, he does not mean the same as we do when using the same terms, the language, at best, is useless. What else does he mean? Only give such an unintelligible character to scriptural phraseology generally, and the value of the bible is utterly destroyed.

And why should the principle which regulates human conduct not be applied to the divine? Is there any essential difference between the relations we bear to each other and those we bear to our Maker? He calls them by the very same names. "If I be a father," says he, "where is mine honour: if I be a master, where is my fear?" Mal. i. 6. Does he profess to act upon principles different from ours? So far from it, that he draws illustrations from our own conduct to convict us of sin against himself; and even calls us in to be judges in the controversy which he maintains with men. "Judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard: what could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Isa. v. 3, 4. Nay, he frames his very law by the same rule; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," Mark xii. 30.

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The import of the last quoted passage is especially worthy of observation. Upon a careful perusal of it, the reader will clearly see that the law of God, in its utmost latitude and in its highest interpretation, demands nothing more than our "strength;" and that God himself—not man—has made this the exact measure and standard of his requirements. It is, moreover, evident from the language here employed, that our Maker considers our strength for the performance of what he requires to lie in the possession of our intelligent faculties; in strict accordance with which idea, he calls upon us to love him "with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind." An opinion has been entertained in some quarters, that this declaration of God's law was given only for our first parents, who had strength equal to its performance, while their depraved descendants have not. We conceive, however, that the words of our Lord above quoted contain the law given to man depraved, as well as to man in innocence. If they do not, then the law of God must have undergone a change with the condition of man: and we ask, what change? And what is the law now? And where are the scriptural authorities for such a view? We know of none, nor can we conceive that any serious attempt will be made to maintain such a position. But, if this be the law as now given to us, let it be observed that it takes for

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the measure of its demands, not the strength of our first parents, or of a state of innocence, but our actual and present strength: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with all thy strength.*" Such is its language to every individual; and this language demonstrates that its demand varies with all variations of strength, if such there be, and that it makes the strength of every man the measure of the obedience which God requires from him.

But suppose this is not held to be the principle of the divine government, and that, in relation to God, a man is to be blamed for doing what he had not power to avoid, or for not doing what he had not power to perform; suppose it admitted that God's right to command is not proportionate to man's ability to obey, and that he exacts labour beyond our strength; the justice of all which is to be consigned (as well it may) to mystery now, and to be cleared up, if it ever can be cleared up, at a future period:—what is the consequence of this? We inevitably associate the character of the most blessed with what is evil and base in our estimation; we place him in the same rank with unreasonable and cruel men, with unrighteous and merciless taskmasters, and even with the cruel monarch whose similar conduct, in requiring bricks without straw, once aroused the indignant vengeance of heaven itself. We set up religion in direct opposition to the

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common sense and indestructible sentiments of mankind. We tell them what they never can believe, and what, if they could believe it, would only increase their enmity to God; what is adapted to attach scorn to professions of justice, and to turn declarations of mercy into ridicule. That these effects are not produced in pious minds we allow, but they are produced to a most deplorable extent in the minds of the ungodly; they naturally and justly follow from the premises, and not at all the less so because they are left to slumber in some persons under the general plea that the subject is mysterious. We maintain that it is not at all mysterious, and should be greatly astonished indeed if the Almighty had left in mystery anything by which his name could be so dishonoured. The mysteries of religion are things above reason, not things contrary to it; nor can they be so, for none such are there in religion to conceal. We can conceive no argument to be plainer or more decisive than this: God holds us justly responsible; proportionate power is necessary to just responsibility; therefore we have power to be and to do all that for which God holds us responsible.

If we examine the nature of the power which is considered necessary to just responsibility among men, we shall find it to be precisely that which we all possess in relation to God. It is

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the possession of means. A man is blamed or punished for not paying his debts, who has the means of doing so, that is, money, within his reach; and the same in every other case. According to the view we have taken of the structure and operation of the mind, we have the means of being all that God expects us to be; or, in other words, we have the power of being so. Taking, therefore, the same ground which satisfies every one of the justice of responsibility among men, we find justice equally manifest in our responsibility to God: why should anything additional be desired in this case? Are we dissatisfied with this state of things?

The argument we have just drawn from the principle of responsibility is greatly strengthened, by adverting to the awful magnitude of the consequences which the Supreme Governor has attached to disobedience. In a case in which the result in suspense was trivial, it might be less material to be scrupulous about the principle. But in the case before us the issue is most momentous. The futurity which is to be decided according to our present conduct comprehends by far the most important portion of our being, its highest joys and its deepest sorrows; they are joys and sorrows for the description of which all sources of earthly illustration have been employed, nay, they have been exhausted, and yet they have proved inadequate; they are to be

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imparted by God's own hand, then unrestrained, and acting with an energy altogether beyond conception; and finally, they are to be perpetual, admitting throughout all eternity of no change but augmentation, according to their respective natures. Is the ground upon which I am subjected to one of the alternatives of such a destiny to be concealed from me?

Nor is this all. In the infliction of indignation so terrible upon his creatures, it is of the utmost moment that the character of God should be cleared of every dark suspicion, by a most vivid and irresistible conviction in the mind of every sinner of the justice of his doom. To imagine that, when such issues as these are suspended on the event, God should have so trifled with his immortal creatures, as to say I will deal with you according to your character, when they have no power to form that character to good or ill, is afflictive beyond all sufferance; nor can a sentiment which involves this consequence ultimately stand. "For then how shall God judge the world?" Rom. iii. 6.

It has sometimes been conceived sufficient to say, that the supposed mystery attending the responsibility of man will be cleared up hereafter, and that no doubt will be entertained of it at the judgment day. Most unquestionably this is a truth; but a truth which no way tends to lessen the importance of satisfactory information on the

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same subject now. The justice of his responsibility is a thing which obviously should be made apparent to a sinner, not merely at the time of his punishment, to silence him in his sufferings, but during the period of his probation, to quicken him in his escape. To suppose knowledge communicated then which is not accessible now, is to suppose the existence of a new case, in which no probation is granted, but in which punishment is inflicted without opportunity of reformation. It would enable a sinner to say, If I could have known this before, I might have been a different man: whereas the equitable character of the final judgment evidently lies in its simply carrying out the principles of the probationary state, and rewarding every man according to that which he might have known, in order to determine the character of that which he was doing. We have no need to hesitate in saying, therefore, that the grounds exhibited as those of our responsibility hereafter must be precisely the same as those exhibited now; and that, if the subject be mysterious in this world, it can receive no satisfactory elucidation in the next.

Another method by which it has been conceived reconcilable with common sense that God should so awfully punish men for not doing what they have not power to do, is by such a statement as follows:—although man has not power to repent, God is willing to give him power, having

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promised to impart his Holy Spirit to them that ask it. Now, it is continued, man has power to ask for the Spirit, and he ought to pray for it, in which case he would have power bestowed for all the rest of his duty.

Without in the first instance impugning the ground on which it rests, I observe that the preceding statement is liable to several objections.

It proceeds upon the assumption of a totally inadmissible principle, namely, that repentance may be a sinner's duty at the time that he has not power to repent. If power should be imparted, whether by the Holy Spirit or in any other method, then unquestionably it might be his duty; but this idea of praying for power to perform a duty implies that the obligation exists before the power is received, which we conceive to be impossible and absurd.

This assumption is also contradicted by a part of the statement itself. A man can pray, it is alleged, and therefore he ought to pray, and will be justly blameable if he do not. Most admirable and undeniable! But the converse surely follows, that, as man cannot repent, he is under no obligation to repent, and for impenitence is liable to no condemnation. Else it might be equally affirmed that men ought to pray though they could not pray, which this hypothesis very carefully and very wisely avoids. Yet why should we be more willing to say that they ought to re-

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pent when they cannot repent, than that they ought to pray when they cannot pray? Is not the principle in both cases the same? The statement shows an apparent desire to avoid this inconsistency; yet by this very principle it destroys itself. Indeed, error is always a suicide.

Further, upon the hypothesis under consideration, the direct and immediate obligation of a sinner is to pray, and not to repent, or to turn to God, or to believe in Christ, for all which he has no power, and which, therefore, it were vain to attempt. His direct and immediate duty is merely to pray that power may be given him for these ends. We conceive this to be an unwarrantable deviation from the address of the gospel. We know, indeed, that Simon was exhorted to pray, but it was for pardon of sin, not for the Holy Spirit; and besides, the encouragement to pray came after an exhortation to repent. See Acts viii. 22. And this is the uniform address of the gospel. "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Acts iii. 19; Luke xiii. 3; Acts xvii. 30; Mark i. 15. This is required of sinners as their first and immediate duty, without the intervention of any other act. The address of our brethren, however, must be of a totally different kind. It must be to this effect: "We do not exhort you

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to repentance, or conversion, or faith in Christ, because you have not power to comply; but we exhort you to pray. You *can* pray. Pray, therefore, for the Holy Spirit to enable you to repent." Now we ask where is the pattern of this address in the holy scriptures? Or, if there be none, by what authority is it introduced, to modify and supersede the wisdom and power of God? Can anything more effectually condemn a hypothesis, than its compelling its advocates to abandon so principal a feature of the divine word? This, verily, is "another gospel."

But let us look yet a little more narrowly at that which a sinner, on this supposition, is exhorted to do. He is urged to pray; for what? Not for pardon, nor deliverance from the wrath to come; nor for peace of conscience, nor purity of heart; but for power. For *power?* Why, power is the very thing which creates both his responsibility and his danger, and is the last thing in the world which a wicked man would wish to possess. Nothing can be more gratifying to him than to learn that he has no power to repent, since he may then be quite certain that it cannot be his duty, and that the neglect of it cannot expose him to equitable condemnation. This is just as he would have it; and, if you tell him that in a certain quarter he may obtain power, his reply might naturally be, "I would

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rather not obtain it; it would impose upon me new duties, and create responsibilities which I am truly happy to avoid." This strange notion, therefore, first makes it dependent upon man himself whether he will have power or not, then leaves to a sinner, who will never pray for power, the gratification of excluding himself from ever being answerable to God for his impenitence.

But we have not yet done. We should like to know upon what grounds it is affirmed that a sinner can pray. Any prayer, in the sense intended, must be in spirit and in truth; it must express the state of the heart. Now such a state of heart as would be expressed in prayer for the Holy Spirit, would certainly be totally dissimilar to the ordinary and previous state of a sinner's mind. If he has power to pray for the Spirit, therefore, he has power to produce this change in the state of his mind. But this change is of the same nature, and is as great in degree, as that implied in repenting of sin and turning to God; and, if a sinner has power for the one, how has he not power for the other?

It requires to be asked, moreover, whether sinners really have power to pray. We, of course, believe that they have; but we are convinced that they have it in no other sense than that in which they have also power to repent. The passages of scripture and other arguments

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which are brought to show that men have not power to repent, would equally demonstrate that they have not power to pray. "Without me," says our Lord, "ye can do *nothing*," (John xv. 5). Why is prayer made an exception to this declaration? In the very same sense in which men cannot repent, they cannot pray; the hindrances to both are precisely of the same character, and of equally certain operation; nor can it be less derogatory to the Holy Spirit to imagine that men can pray without his aid, than to say that they can repent without it. In affirming that men can pray, our brethren are guilty of the same violations of scripture, the same inconsistencies, and other evils, which are charged upon us in saying that men can repent; they cannot, therefore, reasonably accuse us, nor do we attempt to criminate them. We believe the doctrine of man's entire ability for his duty to harmonize with the whole of scripture; and they, who admit it in one point, without answering the end they desire, may just as easily, and much more satisfactorily, admit it in all.

On the ground of the alleged encouragement to a sinner to pray for the Holy Spirit, it has been further said, in reference to the commands of God, that man is not called to obey them in his own strength; and hence it is inferred, that the utterance of commands does not necessarily imply the existence of power to fulfil them.

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This singular representation seems liable to insuperable objections.

In the first place it is obvious that the commands of God are addressed to man as he is, and not to man as he is not. If otherwise, then they are not addressed to man at all, but to some other being; nor can they ever have any bearing upon him, but on the supposition of his coming sometime into the state of superadded strength which they contemplate. It seems evident, however, that no such qualification as this is attached to any of God's commandments. They are uniformly addressed to man as he is, without the slightest intimation that obedience is not required until he obtains additional power to obey; on the contrary, their obligation begins from the moment they are understood, while every act of disobedience is reckoned a sin, and will meet its reward. If man is not called to obey in his own strength, he should not be required to obey while he has no strength but his own; the additional strength which obedience requires should be issued simultaneously with the command. But neither is this the case; since it is manifest that the commands of God are laid upon men for a long period before the Holy Spirit, which is supposed to convey the additional strength, is communicated. Besides, if God does not call men to obey in their own strength, then the strength which he

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requires them to use should be communicated by him unsought, and not merely promised in answer to their request. In cases in which that strength is never given, it follows that he never calls for obedience at all. The only thing which, upon this principle, he can be said to require, is prayer, and prayer for strength; an exercise which is never enjoined (though many other things are which this imagination supersedes), and which, moreover, is quite as much beyond our own strength as any other spiritual exercise, and ought as little to be required until the additional strength is given, which we are thus expected to seek. It may be added, that the objection quite overlooks the fact which we have elsewhere noticed, that God actually makes our own strength the measure of his demands; for thus it stands in the grand expression of his law, and the same qualification doubtless attaches to every individual precept of it, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength." And if the whole that he requires be that to which our own strength is competent, why should he wait for our obedience till we acquire more strength than our own?

In the next place, we do not see how the kindness of God in encouraging us to pray for his Holy Spirit could countenance the idea that he does not call us to obey in our own strength,

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For, in truth, the operation of the blessed Spirit has no relation to our strength, but solely to our disposition. Our strength to do the will of God consists in the possession of our rational faculties, which we have independently of gracious influence; that which hinders us is a wrong disposition, and for the correction of this the Spirit's aid would be implored. His object is not to impart strength, but to inspire resolution; so that, even if it were true (which it is not) that God does not require us to obey without the Spirit, still it could not be said that he calls for no obedience in our own strength. Even when he gives the Spirit, he gives no more strength; and if, therefore, we are ever called upon to obey his will, in our own strength, and in that alone, it must be. Besides, if we were to pray for the help of the Spirit in order that we might obey our Maker's commands, what would this very act and attitude imply? Surely, that obedience to these commands was our duty, whether we obtain the aid that we seek or not. If it were not our duty, why should we seek help to perform it? Our doing so seems clearly to indicate that we have felt ourselves called upon to render obedience before we came to the throne of grace; but, if it be true that we are not called upon to obey while we have only our own strength, then we have been labouring under a delusion, and

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ought rather to return from the mercy-seat with this consolation, that, until strength is given, we are not expected to obey.

In the preceding remarks, we have not directly denied that God has encouraged sinners universally to pray for the Holy Spirit. I come now to call in question the fact. It seems to me rather, that the references to prayer in the sacred oracles are discriminating. As I have stated my sentiments on this point in a mode which satisfies me in a tract which I have published,* I use the freedom of making an extract from it here.

"All encouragement held out in the scriptures to approach to God is through the atonement and mediation of Christ. So says our divine Lord himself:—'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father *in my name*, he will give it you,' John xv. 16. 'For *through him* we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father,' Eph. ii. 18. 'Therefore, *being justified by faith*, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom also we have access by faith unto this grace wherein we stand,' Rom. v. 1, 2. It is a most blessed truth that *through Christ* there is access to God for the vilest of sinners; but the word of God says nothing of a welcome in any other way; and if so, then there is no welcome for impenitent sinners. They have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, but are at this moment

* On Prayer, 32mo.

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rejecting him, whatever words of prayer they may employ: if, therefore, they find access to God, it must be in some way of which the gospel knows nothing, and in some way, moreover, which tends to depreciate, if not to supersede, the atoning work of the Son of God.

"The language of the sacred scriptures respecting prayer is clearly discriminating. It is by no means intimated that whoever prays shall be heard; on the contrary, we have certain characters pointed out whose prayers shall not be heard. Consider seriously the following passages:—'The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord,' Prov. xv. 8. 'When ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear,' Isa. i. 15. 'Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face; should I be inquired of at all by them?' Ezek. xiv. 3. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,' Psalm lxvi. 18. 'Ye ask, and have not, because ye ask amiss, that ye might consume it upon your lusts,' James iv. 3. No language can more clearly describe the character of an impenitent sinner than that used in several of these passages; and we are distinctly told, that, should he make many prayers, the Lord will not hear. As to the words of our Lord, Matt. vii. 7—11, 'Ask, and it shall be

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given you,' &c. the context determines them to refer only to the children of God, or to those who can look up to him as their 'Father who is in heaven,' see ver. 11. It is clearly, therefore, to be set down as a principle, that not every one who prays will be heard, but only those who pray in the attitude in which God has promised to hear."

I cannot but regard this the true doctrine of holy writ; according to those memorable and important words of the Saviour, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me," John xiv. 6.

To this I think it may be added, that the supposition of an unconverted sinner praying for the Holy Spirit is altogether out of nature and possibility. Desire after the renewing influence of the Spirit is desire after a holy object, and for a holy purpose; a desire which cannot be conceived of as existing in an unholy heart. The object supposed to be sought by an unconverted sinner, is one to which, while unconverted, he is intensely averse; and to conceive of him as imploring it is to delude ourselves with an imagination untrue and impossible. The desires which are sometimes (either in reality or in pretence) so numerous in the heart of an unconverted sinner are not desires after the Holy Spirit. He who truly desires so holy a blessing can be nothing short of a converted man.

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CHAP. VIII.

Of the divine use of means independently of the Holy Spirit:—the argument from the limited communication of the Spirit.

We have already adverted to the fact, that what is ascribed to the operation of the Holy Spirit on the one hand, is, on the other, enjoined upon man as his duty; and hence we have inferred the power of man to perform it. But we may go further than this. God has not only issued commands; he has also used a variety of means to induce us to comply with them. Of this character are the invitations and promises, the warnings and threatenings, the doctrines and examples, contained in holy scripture; all of them being addressed to the understanding, and in some way or other appealing to the heart, and constituting together an immense apparatus of motive and persuasion. Many of these portions of holy writ are unquestionably directed specifically to ungodly men, and, by showing the necessity, reasonableness, importance, and blessedness of conversion, are adapted to lead men to repentance. Such passages are also, obviously, of no limited application, but are addressed to sinners generally, and therefore to sinners universally; so that, wherever the knowledge of the

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gospel comes, a system of persuasive means is immediately put into operation upon every person of sane mind.

This system of means does not imply, or comprehend, any communication of the Holy Spirit to the parties on whom it bears. Some, indeed, have conceived that there is a dispensation of the Spirit co-extensive with the means of religious knowledge, a measure of his blessed influence being given to every man to make the best use of it for his own welfare; a sentiment of which, after the notice we have taken of it,* we need only say, that we see in it neither doctrinal truth nor practical value. On the contrary, we apprehend that, as, on the one hand, the scriptures declare the influence of the Spirit to be productive of the fruits of the Spirit; so, on the other, the measure in which such fruits are actually produced clearly and indubitably defines the extent to which his influences have been received. If this be the case, the communication of the Spirit is not universal, even where gospel privileges are enjoyed; since it is manifest that not all who enjoy them are converted to God. In such circumstances, however, the use of means is still universal; since the truths of God's word, which are adapted to lead to repentance, bear upon every man alike. Hence, therefore, it appears, that the communication of the Spirit and the use

* p. 14—16.

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of means are not co-extensive; and that, while there is one portion of mankind who enjoy both these favours, there is another who possess only one of them, namely, the means of persuasion, without the influences of the Holy Spirit.

Let us dwell for a moment upon this state of things, remembering that it is no accident, no mistake; that it is not found where diverse agencies might have given rise to unexpected incongruities; but that it exists in the administration of God himself, and therefore is stamped with the previous knowledge, deliberate design, and perfect wisdom, which characterize all his works.

To what circumstances, then, is the use of means adapted or appropriate? Clearly, to none but those in which there is an apparent possibility of their success. In sickness, for example, it is a general maxim, that while there is life there is hope; and physicians accordingly continue their exertions, with however little expectation of a cure, till a patient expires: but was any one ever so absurd as to perpetuate the use of means after it was ascertained that life was extinct? So accurately is the principle acted upon, as to establish some remarkable exceptions to the general rule; inasmuch as in cases of pulmonary consumption, for instance, it is now known that, after a certain point of its progress, recovery is hopeless, and at that point the application of all medicines is suspended, excepting such as may

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mitigate sufferings which death only can terminate. To every case of the employment of means the same principle extends; and, if there be any readers of this book who would not feel themselves guilty of absurdity in making efforts for an object when they knew there was no possibility of success, they, but they alone, may deny the conclusion to which we are tending.

If a possibility of success be necessary to the appropriate use of means in the abstract, it must be so whether those means be employed by human agents or divine: the objects contemplated may differ, and the means devised; but the principle of the practicability of the end by the means is alike essential to the wisdom of both. But, if this be the case, it inevitably follows that it is possible for sinners to be converted by the means instituted for this end, namely, by means of persuasion without the influence of the Holy Spirit; otherwise God would have resorted to the use of means without propriety or wisdom, which is not to be supposed.

Should any reader here be startled by recollecting how expressly our Lord declares this to be impossible, the author begs to refer to a following chapter, in which the meaning of that and its kindred terms will be fully, and he hopes candidly, investigated. At present let the train of reasoning which is before us be frankly pursued, and, if the idea is to be retained that the Almighty is at-

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tempting to accomplish by the use of persuasion what it is impossible so to achieve, let us fairly observe the attitude in which we place him. We set his administration in this respect on a level with absurd and irrational actions. It is like the conduct of a man who should exhaust his wealth upon speculations from which he knew he could derive no return—a wasteful expenditure of his resources. It is like the effort of a man attempting to lift a mountain in his hand—a ridiculous application of his strength. It is like reasoning with the wind, or expostulating with a stone. Can any one think thus of his Maker?

The difficulty of entertaining such ideas has led some to imagine, that God never intended the means he has employed to answer the end for which they are apparently designed; an opinion which has been strengthened by the sentiment, that none of God's designs can fail of their accomplishment. Of this argument we shall speak presently; let us first observe the extraordinary predicament into which it brings the adorable being on whose behalf it is produced.

We are to conceive, then, that the blessed God uses means adapted to an end, without any design to accomplish that end. Now it may be observed, in the first place, that this immediately stultifies our ordinary modes of reasoning. When we see a person adopting means conducive to an end, we uniformly and inevitably conclude that he designs

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to accomplish that end, or at least to do something towards it; thus, when a man excavates the ground, and collects bricks or other materials, can any body help concluding that he intends to build? We have no method of judging of the intentions of others so certain as the tendency and adaptation of their actions; and if it be of any importance at all to ascertain the designs of God, as in some respects we suppose it is, we can scarcely avoid estimating them by the same rule. Or, secondly, if the designs of God may not be inferred from the adaptation of his actions, it attaches a melancholy stigma to his character. A man who makes preparations as though he meant to do one thing, and all the while means to do another, either does not know his own mind, or he proceeds in a way of concealment and deceit;—he is either a fool or a knave. If, as we most deeply feel, such imputations must be infinitely remote from the Most High, must not such conduct also? It is certain, at all events, that, in instituting means for the conversion of sinners, he *seems* to have this design; it is certain, too, that, as he has constituted us to infer design from the apparent tendency of actions, he knows we shall conceive him to have this design; and if it shall ultimately turn out that he had no such design, what can possibly result from the institution of these means, but delusion to us and mockery to himself?

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Besides, look at the nature and extent of the means themselves. How solemnly and awfully he speaks! With what a vehemence of affection and importunity he pleads! From what a compass the topics are adduced which are employed to persuade and how much do they comprehend of the most attractive and the most terrible that can appeal to the heart of man! Think of the patience, the perseverance, the solicitude, with which all these means are employed, while God himself looks on, with urgent yet suspended wrath, saying, "How shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as Zeboim!" Could he have done more if he really had intended to persuade?

Nor should we forget that criminality is attached to the failure of the means employed. If the Almighty had not intended them as means of conversion, one would think he could find little cause of complaint in the fact that none yield to the employment of them. Why is he angry at this, if he never meant them for this end? He *is* angry, nevertheless, with the wicked every day, and, "if he turn not, he will whet his sword," Ps. vii. 12. When "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire," it will be to "take vengeance on them that obey not the gospel," 2 Thess. i. 8. But why, if the gospel was not meant to be obeyed? The displeasure of God surely can have no foundation but the

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contradiction of his will, and no measure but the degree in which sinners have been guilty of it. Whatever justice or reasonableness there is admitted to be, therefore, in the punishment of the impenitent, there is just as much proof of the intention of God that they should repent at his call.

But none of the designs of God, it is replied, can be frustrated; and so, for the thousandth time, is an apparent truth converted into a real error.

There are two characters, or capacities, in which God acts: in the one he appears as a sovereign agent, accomplishing his own pleasure; in the other as a moral governor, submitting himself, within certain limits, to the pleasure of others. The latter idea is necessarily involved in the creation of rational beings, who may or may not honour their maker, by obeying his commands or accomplishing his will. There is manifestly, therefore, a wide difference between the legislative will of God, and his absolute will; between his design respecting what others should do, and his design respecting what he will do himself. The accomplishment of the latter is absolutely certain, the former is liable to frustration. And this state of things involves no dishonour to God; because, whatever the conduct of his creatures may be, however they may choose to disobey and dishonour him, there are ultimate measures of retribution by which his name and glory will be fully vindicated.

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Seeing, therefore, that there is a most just and important sense in which it may be affirmed that God's will may be resisted, and his designs frustrated, namely, in reference to the whole of his legislative administration, it may correctly be maintained to be his will that men should repent at his call, even though none of them do so. No other part of his will is frustrated herein, than such as the very nature of his government renders liable to frustration.

It may perhaps be conceived, that the fact that none are converted without the influence of the Spirit—a fact which the author most fully and unequivocally maintains—authorizes the inference that the means were not intended for their apparent end. Would the Almighty, it may be said, institute a magnificent apparatus as means of conversion, by which he foreknew that none would be converted?

This question involves a principle which applies to all instances of probationary administration. Can it be wise, and worthy of God, to make an experiment which he knows will fail? Let his own conduct answer. The experiment made with our first parents in the garden of Eden was just such a one; yet he did make it, and he may, therefore, make another on a similar principle. Or let the nature of the case answer. May there not be other results for the production of which the experiment many be worth while,

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although that particular result should not arise? He must have great confidence in his own judgment who would undertake to answer this question in the negative; and, until it is so answered upon sufficient authority, the way is quite open for conceiving that God may have instituted means for conversion, and may have intended them as such, although no sinner should be converted by them.

We might ask, indeed, if the invitations and warnings of holy writ were not intended as means of conversion, for what they were intended. The importance of answering this question has been felt by those who hold the opinion we are combating, but it seems to have been found somewhat difficult to answer it satisfactorily. It is, we are told, to leave sinners without excuse. Strange assertion! It is then to be supposed, that, if it were not for the warnings and invitations of the gospel, sinners would have an excuse for their sins! This is a startling proposition to set out with; but it is nothing to what follows, namely, that the gospel is given to take this excuse away, and for no other end! If this be the case, it must be confessed that the gospel has been grievously misunderstood. It has been imagined to have an aspect of favour, to come with a message of mercy, to be glad tidings of great joy, the grace of God bringing salvation; but, according to this notion, it brings

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nothing but guilt, misery, and wrath. Before it comes men have a valid excuse for their sins, one which makes it impossible for God to punish them justly, and which will certainly exempt them, therefore, from any punishment at all: but, after the gospel comes, this excuse is taken away; then they begin to be chargeable with guilt and liable to misery, and the publication of the gospel is a mere contrivance of his, that he might be able justly to condemn those whom he had already determined to destroy.

Scarcely less extraordinary is the method by which the sinner's excuse is to be taken away. If, indeed, he being already guilty and exposed to ruin, a door of hope is really set before him, then he will have no excuse if he should ultimately perish; and this is exactly the state of things for which we contend. But nothing of this sort is admitted by our companions in argument. They will have the sinner's excuse taken away without salvation having been put into his power; as though the semblance of it were enough to ensure this melancholy end, and the whole affair were characterized by a systematic hypocrisy, which it is astonishing that any man could devise, and yet more astonishing that any man could attribute to his Maker.

The truth which we have thus been endeavouring to establish is, that the warnings and

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invitations of the gospel are used by the Almighty as sincere means of conversion. If this be admitted, we conceive it to follow that those whom means are used to bring to repentance have power to repent, the use of means being otherwise absurd.

To what has been said we may add, that the means employed possess a perfect and manifest adaptation to the faculties of man, irrespectively of the influence of the Holy Spirit. We have seen that man's heart is wrought upon by means of the understanding, according to the tendency of the objects presented to it; and we find that the means instituted by God for the conversion of sinners are in perfect accordance with this constitution, and require nothing more to give them adaptation. He presents to the understanding truths adapted and sufficient to induce repentance; and, according to the structure of the mind, the consideration of those truths would infallibly lead to the result they are adapted to produce. The apparatus, therefore, is framed without a regard to the influence of the Holy Spirit. As a system of means, it is perfect and complete without such an appendage, and it is sure of success by itself, unless some cause prevents the natural and ordinary action of the mind.

The opinion that a measure of the Spirit's influence is given to every man who comes within

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the knowledge of the gospel, has arisen from a conviction of the necessity of admitting power in man, as well as the use of means by God; but, as man is conceived by this school of divines to have no power of himself, it must be given to him, and hence the hypothesis of the universal dispensation of the Spirit. With regard to this scheme of doctrine, we might well be content with the testimony which it bears to the general principle we have advocated; but we may observe in passing, that, if the constitution of our intelligent and moral nature be such as has been described, the supposition of the universal influence of the Spirit is altogether needless. It is conceived only to put a man into such a condition of strength, that, as to religion, he may do what he pleases; but in the very same condition we have shown man to be without supernatural aid. To what end, therefore, is the introduction of an agent in this respect unnecessary?

CHAP. IX.

Whether the Holy Spirit is a gift of justice, or of grace:—the argument from the gracious and sovereign character of the Holy Spirit.

HAVING contemplated the condition of those to whom God does not impart the influences of

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his Spirit, let us briefly survey that of the more favoured portion of mankind on whom this inestimable blessing is bestowed. Judging by the fruits, there are manifestly some into whose hearts this divine agent is commissioned to enter. In what light are we led by the oracles of truth to regard this gift? If the communication of the Spirit is necessary to impart power to men to perform their duty, then we may expect to find it spoken of as a matter of equitable administration, as a thing due to men, inasmuch as there can be no equitable responsibility without commensurate power: but, if we should find it described as altogether a matter of grace and favour, and one respecting which God acts according to his sovereign pleasure, then we may not unreasonably conclude that it is not necessary to the just responsibility, or to the power, of man. An examination of the holy scriptures will readily decide this question.

The gift of the Holy Spirit, we apprehend, is invariably spoken of as an act of rich and boundless grace.

1. This may be inferred from the passages which represent mankind in their natural state, and independently of any communication of the Spirit, as in a state of entire unworthiness and just condemnation, Rom. i. 18, *et seq.* ii. *passim*: so that any good thing given them must be of mercy, or free favour. But the Holy Spirit is

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not only a good thing, but one of the best things which the eternal Father has to bestow; wherefore it is of grace.

2. It appears also from the fact, that the gift of the Spirit is a part of the work of redemption; which is uniformly represented as originating in the free grace of God alone, and as characterized by it in all its parts. Now, if the gift of the Spirit be a part of this dispensation, it must partake of its general and essential character of grace.

3. The same conclusion may be drawn from the connexion which exists between the gift of the Spirit and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is one of the fruits of his death, and could not otherwise have been bestowed, Gal. iii. 13, 14. But the gift of his Son is declared to be the very highest expression of the Father's love to a guilty world, John iii. 16, a gift as free as wonderful; and such, therefore, must be the character of every other gift which comes through this channel of mercy.

4. The discrimination and sovereignty which appear in the dispensation of the Spirit lead us to the same result. Whatever is necessary to the power of men to act a right part in their present state of being God has dispensed universally, with an equal, that is, an equitable hand; all that may be given to men over and above this measure of good, he considers as subject to

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his unequal and discretionary distribution, in relation to which, while he gives to every man severally as he will, he says to every other man, "Friend, I do thee no wrong; may I not do what I will with mine own?" Matt. xx. 13. No conclusion can be more easy or more safe, therefore, than this; that, respecting whatever gift the blessed God uses sovereignty, giving it to some and not to others, that gift is not necessary to the power of man to secure his own welfare. It is plain, however, that God has used sovereignty in the gift of his Spirit, which is imparted to some and not to others; wherefore we maintain that the gift of the Spirit is not necessary to man's power for his duty.

5. Love, or kindness, is declared, also, to be the prevailing motive and character of the Spirit himself, in his gracious operations. Hence the apostle speaks of "the love of the Spirit," Rom. xv. 30, and the sacred writers generally represent the enjoyment of his influences as a matter of the highest thankfulness and praise.

If, therefore, the communication of the Spirit is thus, without exception, ascribed to the free grace of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we conclude that it is not requisite to human power, or just responsibility.

Some, who maintain the reverse of this conclusion, have been led also to question the premises, and to assert, with more or less dis-

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tinctness, that, as a measure of the Spirit's influence is essential to enable every man to do his duty, so God is bound to give it to every man for this end; that such a help is due to our present condition; and that he could not justly judge and punish us, as fallen creatures, without previously restoring us to such a state of power. This is a fair specimen of the weight with which the sentiment of man's natural inability bears upon every portion of divine truth; a sentiment not more mischievous in sapping the foundation of human responsibility, than it is injurious to the lustre of divine sovereignty. That the gift of the Spirit is in any measure *due* to man, is one of the last things which, with any regard to scripture, it would seem possible to maintain; nor can it be asserted, without implying the connected but incredible idea, that God was equally bound to redeem the world, and to effect its redemption by the death of his Son.

CHAP. X.

Whether the ability of man is not maintained in the holy scriptures:—the argument from express words of sacred writ.

THE sacred scriptures are the standard and depository of all truth. They are not only a testimony, but a law; and nothing is truth which

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is not according to this rule. How deeply ashamed would the writer feel, if he were conscious of shrinking in the least degree from this test; or if he were fearful lest the word of God should overthrow his opinion! Infinitely removed be such a feeling! Welcome, thou light of heavenly wisdom, whatever shadows may disperse at thy rising!

Frequent references to the scriptures of truth have already been made; but it yet remains to notice some particular and important passages, which have not pointedly come under review.

I. We conceive, then, that there are portions of holy writ in which the power of man is expressly asserted.

1. Such a one occurs, Isaiah vi. 9, 10. "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; see ye, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

This forcible passage, with some slight variations, is quoted by our Lord, as recorded by all the evangelists. In John xii. 40, it is thus quoted: "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and

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be converted, and I should heal them." In Luke viii. 10: "That seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand." In Mark iv. 12: "That seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." In Matt. xiii. 11, 15, more fully: "By hearing ye shall hear, and not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive; for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed: lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

It is quoted also by the apostle Paul, in his appeal to the unbelieving Jews at Rome, Acts xxviii. 26, 27: "Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive; for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

It is thus clearly established that the passage refers to the matter before us, that is to say, to the state and action of the human mind in

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relation to the reception of divine truth. The import of it remains to be inquired into.

We observe, then, that the prophet uses two series of terms, the one with an affirmative, and the other with a negative. Those who reject the word of the Lord do "see" and "hear," but they do not "perceive" or "understand." This might seem to indicate that what they see and hear does not reach the mind, so as to be literally understood or perceived; but it is impossible to take it in this sense, inasmuch as this would be nothing short of a state of mental incompetency. Nor is it so intended, as is manifest from that which immediately follows—"lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears." This clause is explanatory of the former, and shows its meaning to be, that unbelievers both see and do not see, both hear and do not hear. It is now evident that we have the words see and hear used in two senses, inasmuch as, if we take them in one and the same sense, the passage contains a direct contradiction, which cannot be supposed. The meaning of course is, that they see but do not observe, that they hear but do not hearken; and that, while they see and hear, the things declared are as much disregarded as though they neither saw nor heard them.

The language of Isaiah gives rise, however, to a further question, relating to the source to which

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this disregard of divine rebukes is to be referred. The word of the Lord to him runs in the following terms; "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see," &c. It might be inferred from this that indisposition to obey is the result of divine action on the mind of man, and not therefore a matter of just blame. Some of the new testament citations of this passage are of a similar apparent import. While it is quite impossible to suppose that such is the real meaning, there is sufficient evidence in the quotations themselves that it is not so. As quoted by our Lord in Matthew, and by Paul, the words convey a simple statement of the fact that "the heart of the people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing," while the next clause —"their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes"—unequivocally indicates the reference of the whole passage to a wilful and therefore a criminal inattention. It is not for a moment to be supposed that Christ and his apostle pervert the language of the seer from the meaning he intended. They do but translate it. Isaiah spoke as a prophet, and in the language of prophecy it was customary to represent God as doing what was actually to be done by men. No doubt can be entertained, therefore, as to the interpretation of this text. It affirms that men

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have eyes to see, and ears to hear; nay, that they do both see and hear, but that they do not observe nor hearken; on the contrary, they shut their eyes, they obstruct their ears, they stupify their hearts, lest they should see, hear, and feel to practical purpose the truths they dislike. In a word, men have faculties in the use of which they would do all that God requires of them; but they will not employ them for this end.

2. A passage of similar bearing may be found, John ix. 39, 41. "And Jesus said, For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind ye should have no sin; but now, ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." In this passage there is a mixed reference to the sight of the body and the state of the mind, arising from the circumstance that our Lord had just spoken to the blind man whom he had restored to sight, and had taken occasion from his cure to reprove the spiritual blindness of the Jews. "For judgment," says he, or for discrimination, "am I come into the world: that they which see not might see," (referring to the man then present, who had been restored to sight,) "and that they which see might be made blind,"

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that is, that the blindness, or wilful ignorance, of those classes among the Jews who had the amplest means of knowledge might be made apparent—referring to the perverseness with which the Jews had rejected the proofs of his Messiahship, as derived from that and other miraculous works. The Pharisees present concluded themselves to be among "those who see," and were doubtless described by our Lord under this phrase; but, somewhat piqued at the seeming association of blindness with their names, they asked him, "Are we blind also?" Some persons would have immediately replied, Yes, certainly; and, had this been really the case, our Lord could not properly have avoided it, nor can we believe that he would have shrunk from it. But mark his answer: "If ye were blind ye should have no sin;" if you had not the power of appreciating the evidence of my true character afforded by this miracle, there would be nothing blameworthy in your not being convinced by it: "but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." To avoid the force of this latter clause, it has been said that our Lord is not there asserting that they did see, but only taking them at their own word, which might be false, and probably was so. But when we consider that the circumstances were such as brought the truth of the statement into immediate question, it will be evident that, if it was not true, it was by all

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means incumbent on their divine instructor to show its falsehood; otherwise he would have been allowing them to think it true, and thus, if it were not so, attaching his sanction to a ruinous error. Besides, he has just before plainly described them in similar terms, as "those who see;" so that he does not merely take them at *their* word, but at his own. And, lastly, the nature and importance of the argument built upon it precludes the possibility of considering it as an error. The fact of their seeing is made the premises for the conclusion that they were criminal. Their saying We see, if it were a mistake could not authorize this conclusion; but, on the contrary, would lead to the inference that their rejection of the Messiah had no guilt in it—one of the last lessons we can conceive to have been inculcated by our Lord. The entire argument, therefore, is this: "If ye were blind ye should have no sin;" if you had not power to appreciate the evidence of my true character, you would incur no blame by rejecting me; "but, as ye truly say, ye see;" you have all facilities for apprehending my glory; "therefore your sin remaineth." No words can more clearly assert that these wicked Pharisees were not really blind, though they acted as if they were. They possessed full power of acting otherwise; and, if this had not been the case, they would have had no sin.

We are very well aware that, upon another

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occasion, our Lord represented these same persons as blind, Matt. xxiii. 16—19. We suppose it will be maintained, however, on both sides, that this divine instructor was not guilty of contradicting himself; and if so, we must understand him to say that the Pharisees were blind only in such a sense as was consistent with their seeing; that is to say, that, possessing the power of sight, they did not use it, but acted as though they were blind, and so remained in ignorance and sin. But of this and similar expressions we shall speak more fully presently.

3. The same truth is expressly asserted by our Lord, Matt. xiii. 12; "Because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand;" language which fully establishes the power of men to effect all the purposes for which sight and hearing were given—they see and hear—while it touchingly complains of the guilty inattention by which instruction was rendered fruitless.

4. We mention a large portion of scripture carrying the same idea with it, when we refer to the parables of our Lord. Every one has been struck, not merely with their general verisimilitude and beauty, but with their minute and comprehensive accuracy. It may reasonably be expected, therefore, that in them no important feature in the character or condition of man will be omitted; or that, if not illustrated in one

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parable, it will be found in another. Least of all can it be supposed that a matter of such particular prominence and such vital importance as the ability or inability of man has been overlooked. Nor shall we find that it has been so.

If the power appropriate to man as a moral agent be wanting, the objects introduced emblematically to exhibit his conduct, either as to what it is or what it ought to be, should be equally destitute of the power appropriate to them; otherwise the analogy necessary to the very structure of the parable does not exist, and nothing can result from it but confusion and error. So when man as a moral agent is compared to a tree, if the former be devoid of power for moral action, the latter should be destitute of power for vegetable action; or if a man's conduct towards God is illustrated by the conduct of a son towards his father, if the former have no power over his conduct towards God, the latter should have no power over his conduct towards his parent.

Let the reader recollect himself but a moment, and he will be convinced that none of the parables are formed upon this principle. They uniformly introduce, for the illustration of our moral action, objects or agents in possession of the entire power belonging to their nature. If an impenitent sinner be compared to a fig-tree, it is to a living and not a dead one, Luke xiii. 6. If the condition of man is shadowed forth by that of

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servants who received talents to enploy for their Lord, they receive every man "according to his several ability," Matt. xxv. 15. If the address of the gospel is likened to the invitation to a feast, the parties to whom it is addressed have full power of accepting it, Luke xiv. 16, *et seq.* We might go in the same manner through the whole of the parables, and not find a single instance in which a different idea is insinuated.

This is a remarkable fact, and bears directly upon our argument. These parables, in which man, in relation to his moral conduct, is compared to objects possessing the whole power which naturally pertains to them, clearly intimate that man is in possession of all the power requisite to moral action. If this is not the case, the parables are founded on a mistaken analogy, and must lead to erroneous conclusions.

If man were really destitute of power, he not only might, but *must* be compared to objects devoid of their proper strength, as to a dead tree, a dead man, the diseased, or the blind; but it is very remarkable that, while epithets of this kind are freely applied to man himself, not a single object of this class is used for the purpose of parabolical illustration.

5. In this place, also, we may introduce the passage in which the apostle asserts the intrinsic and independent sufficiency of the divine word: "From a child thou hast known the holy scrip-

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tures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus," 2 Tim. iii. 15. We scarcely need stay to prove that the apostle here assigns to the scriptures a sufficiency to make men wise to salvation apart from the influence of the Holy Spirit. No reference to the Spirit is contained in the passage or its connexion, nor is there any ground for introducing it. We observe more particularly, that the sufficiency of the scriptures to impart saving wisdom is not to be viewed in the abstract, but in connexion with the persons to whom they are given; they are able to make *us* wise unto salvation. Now this, it is manifest, implies something respecting our condition, as well as the excellency of the scripture itself. It is not able to make an idiot, or an infant, or a dead man, wise unto salvation. It can have this effect upon none but such as are capable of understanding, appreciating, and obeying it; whence it evidently follows, that we, whom it *is* able to make wise unto salvation, are able to understand it, to appreciate, and to obey.

6. Another class of passages concurring to prove the sentiment under review, may be found in those which require and enforce consideration, not merely as a duty, but as the method of obedience to the divine will. These which follow are such: " O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter

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end!" Deut. xxxii. 29. "Consider how great things God hath done for you," 1 Sam. xii. 24. "Thus saith the Lord, Consider your ways," Hag. i. 5—7. Of the same tenor are the texts in which the Lord requires men to hearken,—a word expressive simply of attention, or consideration: "Take heed and hearken, O Israel,' Deut. xxvii. 9. "Hearken to me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me; *hear*, and your soul shall live," Isa. xlvi. 12, lv. 2, 3. In some instances the word hearken is used to denote the very obedience to which it leads. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," 1 Sam. xv. 22. "Who will hearken and hear for the time to come?" Isa. lxii. 23. To these may be added the passages in which God rests the burden of his complaint for disobedience on the want of consideration: "But they refused to hearken, and stopped their ears," Zech. vii. 7. "Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider," Isa. i. 3. "They consider not in their hearts," Hosea vii. 2. "But they said, We will not hearken. Behold ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that ye may not hearken unto me," Jer. vi. 17, xvi. 12.

Every attentive reader of the scriptures knows

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that similar language might be quoted to a great extent. Let us ask what is the import of it. Can it imply less than we have stated above, namely, that, in God's own view, consideration is the method by which obedience is to be induced, and an exercise from which it would certainly follow? To engage us to obedience he requires consideration, and nothing else; if obedience be not rendered, he ascribes it to the want of consideration, and to nothing else. Is he right in doing so? Is it conceivable that he would have done so, if the effects ought to be referred to any other cause? Are we going beyond the clear testimony of the divine word when we say, that the question of obedience or disobedience is exclusively a question of consideration or inconsideration? But, if this be the case, then it cannot be maintained that we have not power to obey, unless it can be said also that we have not power to consider, which obviously cannot be said of any man who retains his intelligent faculties. So long as we have power to consider, according to God's own word we have power to obey.

We may be allowed here to pause a moment, for the sake of pointing out to such of our readers as have made themselves acquainted with the principles of moral science as laid down in our first chapter, their perfect accordance with the language of sacred writ. We have stated

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that our entire faculty of self-regulation lies in the power of attention, or consideration; and that this faculty gives an effective power of self-control, so far as motives are sufficient for the purpose. The scriptures address us precisely in the manner which we should anticipate upon this supposition. They call upon us to obey commands, and to consider that we may obey; if we do not obey, they tell us that it is because we have not considered; both these addresses proceeding plainly upon the principle, that, if we had considered, we should have obeyed. The scriptures, it is true, were not intended to teach us moral philosophy; but there is nevertheless a system of moral philosophy on which the scriptures proceed, and, when we find one with which they manifestly harmonize, we may satisfactorily assure ourselves of its truth.

CHAP. XI.

The argument from express words of scripture continued.

II. Besides the passages which refer directly to the power possessed by man, those bear as decisively upon the argument, which indicate the nature of the cause preventing the performance of right action.

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Two things being necessary to the performance of any action, namely, power to perform it and a disposition to perform it, one of two causes likewise, or either of them, may operate to its prevention; namely, a want of disposition or a want of power. Do the scriptures say anything respecting the cause which hinders men from repenting? And if they do, to which of those above-mentioned do they ascribe this impediment? The information they contain on this subject may be expected to be full and satisfactory.

1. It will now probably occur immediately to every reader, how often we are expressly taught that men *cannot* repent. Such is the language of our Lord:—"No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. Without me ye can do nothing. With men this is impossible," John vi. 44, xv. 5; Matt. xix. 26. Similar expressions are of frequent occurrence in the sacred writings. This phraseology has been conceived to prove, beyond the possibility of doubt, that men have no power to turn to God. Is it not, it is demanded, expressly asserted? And can a doctrine so clearly stated ever be impugned, without calling in question the authority of holy writ?

Far be it from us to incur this heavy criminality, or to betake ourselves to such a refuge!

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It must be a bad system which shrinks from any portion of God's word; and the writer hopes he should feel no satisfaction in any sentiment he holds, if there were a single expression in the oracles of God to which he could not attach a fair, full, and consistent meaning. In this case he has simply to observe, that he conceives the import of the terms in question to have been mistaken.

In order to show this, we may begin by observing that the word cannot is by no means invariably used to denote the want of power, but is very commonly employed to express determination. We do this with great frequency in our ordinary conversation: as when we say, I cannot come, or, I cannot agree to it; in which cases all that we mean to convey is our determination not to do these things. Now, if it be a fact that the term cannot is not always used to denote power, but sometimes determination, then the argument drawn from its use is clearly inconclusive; and it requires to be ascertained in what cases it refers to the one, and in what cases to the other.

This inquiry it will be much better to conduct on general principles, than with reference to particular passages of scripture. Let us first ascertain the rule by which the import of the term is regulated, and then impartially apply it to whatever cases may arise. This rule we conceive to

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be as follows:—The term cannot denotes determination, and not power, when and| whenever it is applied to acts, whether internal or external, the performance of which depends upon the state of the mind.

It is scarcely needful to observe, that many of our actions do depend upon the state of the mind, and upon nothing else. Whether, in a state of health and freedom, I rise or sit, I walk or remain in the house, I read or write (and innumerable cases might be added), depends solely on the state of my mind; that is to say, according to the state of my mind I may, and shall, either do them or let them alone. Now, if in any of these cases I were to use the word cannot, as in saying, I cannot walk now, or I cannot come yet, the word cannot in this case would simply express my determination that I would not. The reason why it must be understood in this sense is, that I am plainly in full possession of power to do the very things I have said I cannot do; nothing but my determination not to do them prevents me; and therefore the word cannot, in this case, must be taken to denote determination and not power.

To show how purely this term is applied to the purpose of expressing determination only, without the slightest association with the idea of power, we may give the following example. Conceive a plan to be submitted to you for your

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consideration and concurrence. It appears to you unadvisable, and you say, I am not willing to embark in such a business. Suppose it is pressed upon you more strongly; you still disapprove of it, and reply, Do not urge it, for I never *can* agree to it. Why have you made this change of expression? Had any fit of inability come over you just at that moment, that you said, I cannot? Or did you not mean to express precisely the same thing by cannot in your second answer as by not being willing in your first, only more decidedly? Imagine further, that, upon fuller information, your objections vanish, and you ultimately agree to the plan proposed. Is this because you have acquired any new power, which you had not five minutes before? Or is it not rather that your determination merely has undergone a change? It is evident, therefore, that the phrases cannot and will not are used interchangeably, the former conveying precisely, though more emphatically, the meaning of the latter.

It may be said, that, although in some instances, where an action depends on the state of the mind, the word cannot may denote only determination and not power, it does not follow that this should always be the case; sometimes, perhaps, it may indicate a want of power also. The proof of such a use of the word lies upon the party who adduces the possibility of it. We

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believe that such a case does not exist, but that, upon the most extensive and accurate examination, it will be found that, whenever the word cannot is applied to acts which depend upon the state of the mind, it denotes determination only, without any reference to power. Nor can it very well be otherwise. For, in the first place, it would be a very confounding method of speech to make one and the same word convey two dissimilar, and in some respects opposite ideas, at once. It is a considerable freedom with language, to employ a word for different purposes at different times, and in different circumstances; but to go further than this is a kind of legerdemain, which could not be accomplished without some little difficulty. In the next place, it is not in the nature of things that, when an act depends upon the state of the mind, power should be wanting; for, if power is wanting, then the act does not depend on the state of the mind. It is very possible that both power and disposition to perform a given action may be wanting at the same time, as, for example, that a man may have neither money nor inclination to pay his debts; but in this case it is clear that the non-performance of the action does not depend upon the state of his mind, because, if the state of his mind were different, still he could not pay his debts, not having money for the purpose. If it were said of such a man, he cannot pay his

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debts, nobody would understand this of his will, but of his power. The reason of this is, that the strict and primary reference of the word cannot is to power, its reference to will being secondary and analogical, whence it follows that, whenever the idea of power is present, the word cannot must apply to it, and not to will. It can apply to will, therefore, only when the idea of power is absent, and obviously must do so whenever this is the case. Whenever, therefore, an act depends upon the state of the mind, a case in which the idea of power is not implicated, if the word cannot be used in reference to it, it refers to determination only, and not to power.

Our object in these remarks is not to frame any artificial rule to which language may be forcibly reduced, but to ascertain upon what principles its employment is actually regulated among mankind. If the universal practice in reference to the word cannot be as above stated, the rule so deduced is capable of the most strict and just application to the declarations of holy writ. The language in which God has spoken to us is the language of men; it was in all respects suitable, desirable, and necessary, that it should be so, if it was intended for the instruction of mankind; nor can any good reason be assigned why the import of it should not be determined by the same methods as that of ordinary life. Upon this principle, then, we ask

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what our divine Lord means when he says, "No man can come unto me." The meaning of it may be, no man has power to come; but since the word cannot has not always this meaning, it is proper to inquire into the particulars of the case. Upon what does a sinner's coming to Christ depend? If it depends upon the state of his mind, the word cannot in this case does not relate to power, but to determination only. Let the scriptures be consulted on this head.

It is remarkable that, when our friends from whom we differ refer to sacred writ for information respecting the obstacle to repentance, their quotations are invariably of one kind. They adduce immediately various declarations that men cannot come to Christ; and, if you were to listen to them only, you would never imagine that there were passages which exhibited the subject in any other light. Yet there are such passages, and many of them. A sample of them follows: "Ye *will* not come unto me that ye might have life. How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye *would* not. He said, *I will not*. Because I called, and ye *refused*, I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. Seeing ye *put away from you* the word of God, we turn unto the Gentiles," John v. 40; Matt. xxiii. 37, xxi. 29; Prov. i. 21; Acts xiii. 46. Such quotations might be

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greatly multiplied. And, in considering the import of the divine oracles respecting the hindrance to repentance, why should they be overlooked? Have they no meaning? On the contrary, we conceive their meaning to be clear and indubitable; namely, that sinners do not repent because they will not. Their conduct in this respect depends upon the state of their minds; there being nothing but enmity to God to prevent their coming to him through his Son. But if this be the case, then, according to the rule laid down, the word cannot does not refer to power, but to determination only.

If this conclusion is to be set aside, it must be by showing that repentance does not depend upon the state of a sinner's mind, that there is some other obstacle to it besides the wickedness of his heart, and such an obstacle as would still operate if the wickedness of his heart were destroyed. It would afford us great pleasure to see this fairly undertaken, and we should look with much interest for the result. For ourselves we will only say, that, if there were any such impediment, the burden of men's impenitence could not be justly laid upon their unwillingness, where, nevertheless, our divine Lord has laid it, and where doubtless it truly rests.

In reference to the discussion in which we are engaged, the terms will not, &c. have a more decisive bearing than the term cannot, to which the greater

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prominence has been given. The last is an analogical expression, and requires a limited construction; the former are literal expressions and have only to be interpreted in their strict and obvious sense: the latter tells us what the hindrance to repentance is like, the former tells us what it is. With respect to the nature of the impediment, therefore, these are the only passages which give us any information at all, and, instead of being thrown into the back-ground, are the only ones which should be consulted.

If it be finally admitted, and we conceive it cannot be disproved, that the only thing which obstructs the return of sinners to God through Christ is the alienation of their hearts, then it follows, as we have shown, that the word cannot, as applied to this case, is meant to express no want of power, but simply the sinner's determination. Should an objection be raised on the supposed ground of taking away the meaning of words, or of introducing confusion into the use of language, the reply is obvious. We wish to understand the words of holy writ precisely in the same manner as we do those of ordinary life, as it is quite natural, and even imperative that we should, unless reason can be shown for the contrary. Can any such reason be shown? Why do any persons insist upon our allowing a meaning to certain phrases *in* the the bible, which neither we nor they would assign to them

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out of the bible? The proof of such a necessity lies with them, and must be adduced before we can comply with their demand. So far from taking away the meaning of words, we give them the precise and full import currently attached to them; why do those who differ from us impose on them a different one? And as to introducing confusion into the use of language, this is the very thing of which they are pre-eminently guilty, while the method we adopt is the only way of avoiding it. No confusion arises in ordinary intercourse from the word cannot being frequently used to express determination only; and for this reason, that the cases in which actions depend upon the state of mind are for the most part very manifest, and that in all such cases the word is known to refer to the determination alone. If the language of scripture is treated on the same principle, there will be no confusion in the use of it; but, if it comes to be insisted on that the word cannot must in all cases denote some want of power, or that it may do so in some instances where nevertheless the act depends upon the state of the mind, this will introduce confusion enough, and it would as grievously confound the intercourse of men, as it does the oracles of God.

Should it be asked why, if men have power to repent, it is so repeatedly and strongly asserted that they cannot, it is only needful to ask in re-

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ply, why, in common life, we so frequently say we cannot do a thing which we really can do. The reason in both cases is one and the same. It is that this form of expression conveys the idea of strong feeling and fixed determination more emphatically, and at the same time less offensively, than any other. So when, in reply to your importunate request, a friend says, I *cannot* do it, it is equivalent to his telling you that it is of no use to press him further; and it intimates at the same time that his refusal arises from no unwillingness to oblige you, but from the imperative influence of other considerations. Or so again, when you bid a mother throw her child into the water, or into the fire, and she clasps the babe to her bosom, and exclaims, I *cannot* do that, it is merely a natural mode of telling you how vehemently her feelings revolt from the act. Just such is the use of these terms in sacred writ. They express the feeling and determination of a sinner with great emphasis, and afford, perhaps, the only method by which the painful but important truth of its certain prevalence can be convincingly conveyed.

We may now perhaps dismiss, without more particular consideration, the whole of the passages of scripture the force of which lies in the use of the term cannot. To decide the import of one is to decide that of them all. With them, also, may be classed the kindred term im-

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possible, which occurs Matt. xix. 26; but which is used, and must be interpreted, upon the same principle as the almost identical word cannot, already considered.

A phrase somewhat different occurs in Rom. v. 6: "For when we were yet *without strength*, Christ died for the ungodly." We conceive this passage to be inapplicable to the question before us; inasmuch as it seems to refer, not to the case of a sinner's coming to God through Christ, but to the practicability of opening a way for the approach of a sinner at all. Most certainly we are without strength to make an atonement for sin, or to satisfy any of the demands of God's righteous law in respect of the justification of a sinner; and this consideration gives great force to the statement of the apostle, that, in this helpless condition, Christ died for us. But this has no connexion with the present argument. The question we are now to answer pre-supposes that Christ has died, and that the way to God through him is open; whether a sinner has power to come to God through Christ, is a question very different from that which relates to his power to atone for sin, and is to be answered on very different principles.

The same remark is applicable to another passage, which has been quoted in this connexion, from Rom viii. 8. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." The apos-

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tle in this place is not referring to the actions of ungodly men, but to their estimation in the sight of God; and the sentiment would be more accurately expressed by saying, Those who are in the flesh cannot be acceptable to God, or approved by him, Θεῷ ἀρέσαι οὐ δύνανται. In this view the text has manifestly no bearing on the subject before us.

2. Besides the passages which contain the terms cannot and impossible, which have been erroneously conceived to be express declarations of human inability, there are others which are regarded as furnishing powerful auxiliary evidence on the same side. Such are the following: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye who are accustomed to do evil learn to do well. Who were dead in trespasses and sins. Can these dry bones live?" Jer. xiii. 23; Eph. ii. 1; Ezek. xxxvii. 3.

We class these passages together at present, for the sake of making respecting them one general observation. They are all of them plainly metaphorical. They are not descriptions, but figures of speech. It may perhaps be said that this is no uncommon way of evading a difficulty, and may be used for ill purposes as well as good. We are quite aware of this. But still it must be allowed that there are figurative expres-

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sions in the divine oracles; and while we fully admit, on the one hand, that they have a definite and important meaning which must not be frittered away, we must contend, on the other, against any unwarrantable stretch of their signification. To avoid difficulties on both sides, let us set down, in a few words, the rules by which the character and the import of any figurative expression may be ascertained.

We agree, then, that every passage and every phrase is to be taken literally, unless there is something in its position or use which determines it to be figurative; but every expression must be taken to be figurative which, in its literal sense, is inapplicable to the subject to which it is applied. When, for example, our Lord says, John xv. 1, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman," inasmuch as the terms vine and husbandman are not literally applicable to the Divine Father and Son, we say they are figuratively used. Now there is no difficulty whatever in the use of this rule. The nature of the things ordinarily spoken of is sufficiently obvious to inform us, with very little trouble, whether the words applied to them are literally applicable or not. If they are, we allow of no metaphor; if they are not, we cannot deny it.

Let us inquire further, what effect is produced on the meaning and interpretation of a word, when it is figuratively employed.

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When a word is figuratively employed, it is taken from a subject to which it properly or strictly refers, and applied to one to which it does not properly refer. So when David says, "The Lord is my light:" he takes the word light, which properly refers to the effect of some luminous body on the eye, and applies it to the influence of divine mercy on his mind. Now, when a word is so taken from one subject and applied to another, it is obviously impossible that, in its secondary use, it can convey *all* the ideas which it did in its primary one, the two objects being far from having altogether the same properties. The effect of using a word figuratively, therefore, is to limit its signification, and to select some of the ideas it has conveyed in its proper employment, for application in its new and (rhetorically speaking) improper one. Thus, in saying, "The Lord is my light," the psalmist drops all the ideas belonging to light as a material body, and retains only those relating to its directing and cheering influence. This rule also we shall find uniformly and easily applicable. We have only to notice the features in which the objects compared either agree or disagree: in those in which they agree the ordinary import of the term which is now metaphorically used will apply; in those in which they do not agree its application is not to be attempted.

With these simple rules in our hand, let us

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resume the passages which await our attention.

(1.) Jer. xiii. 23. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? Then may ye who are accustomed to do evil learn to do well." The Ethiopian changing his skin and the leopard his spots, is here put in comparison with a man's ceasing to do evil and learning to do well; that is, a change in the state of the body is compared with a change in the state of the mind—a change in something in its own nature unalterable by man, with a change in something which *is* susceptible of alteration, as the state of the mind undeniably is, by human action. It is evident that there is no similarity in the two cases in respect of capability of change; and on this point, therefore, nothing can be learnt from the comparison. The aspect in which the cases are similar is the actual non-production of the result, and the certainty that it will not be produced. Let means to any extent be employed for the changing of the Ethiopian's skin or the leopard's spots, the end will never be attained; and with equal certainty, notwithstanding the use of every means, will those who have been accustomed to do evil never learn to do well. This we conceive to be the fair and full force of the metaphor here employed, and we most freely adopt it. Our readers will perceive, however, that, like the terms already noticed, it does nothing more than express emphatically the fixed-

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ness of a sinner's determination; it indicates nothing respecting his power, only that, by this very circumstance, the existence of it is implied.

(2.) Eph. ii. 1. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

This passage has been so commonly taken to denote a sinner's state of mind, that it may seem strange, perhaps, to call in question this application of it. I am of opinion, nevertheless, from a very careful examination of the context and the scope of the apostle's argument, that the words quoted relate to the misery of a sinner's condition, and not to the state of his mind; and I think any person who will insist upon giving the clause its proper and necessary meaning in its place will in the end be satisfied of the correctness of this view. On this ground I might pass it by as irrelevant to the question before us; but, that there may be no semblance of injustice to the argument, I am willing to take it in the ordinary sense. It is undoubtedly very forcible language, nor have I any inclination to weaken it. I apprehend, however, that it is to be considered as figurative and not literal. The word death properly refers to organic or physical life; but here it is applied to a state of the mind, which, although it may be in some respects analogous to natural life, is manifestly not identical with it, and to which, therefore, a term de-

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rived from so different a subject cannot be in every respect applicable. The import of the term death, therefore, must be limited in this case; and not all the ideas ordinarily conveyed by it can be transferred to the new object, but only such as the existing analogy may permit. The things put into comparison with each other are the body under the influence of death, and man, as a moral agent, under the influence of a sinful disposition. Now, death produces two principal effects: first, the non-performance of vital action, as seeing, hearing, feeling, &c.; and secondly the destruction of the organization from which these actions proceeded, or the non-existence of power to perform them. In like manner, a sinful disposition induces the entire non-performance of right action in one who is under its reigning influence; but the influence of a sinful disposition does *not* destroy the structure from which right action may proceed, that consisting, as we have shown, in the intelligent faculties with which God has made us, and which remain as entire in the wicked as in the just. We know in fact, that, whatever the influence of trespasses and sins on a man's mind may be, they do not destroy its powers of action; for in that case it would be as incapable of evil as of good. The point in which an analogy does obtain between the state of a dead body and that of a mind under the influence of sin,

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is this; that, as the destruction of animal life suspends the exercise of animal functions, so right exercises of mind are in fact prevented by the influence of sin, and with as much certainty, though not by a similar cause. All that this passage teaches us, therefore, is the fixedness of a sinner's determination, or the entire certainty that men of themselves will not turn to God.

Should any of our readers be dissatisfied with the view now given, it will be material for them to show, if it can be shown, that the term dead has in this case a literal, and not a figurative meaning. If they can do this, they will gain a great advantage to their cause. There are, however, some few difficulties in the way of it. We may observe, for example, that, literally speaking, the soul of man is not dead but alive, as is manifest from its continual action, though that action be wrong; to which it might be added that the soul is never to die, because it is immortal. The apostle, moreover, is not telling us in what state man is generally, but in what state he is so far as he is influenced by sin,—"dead in [or by] trespasses and sins;" and we know that the influence of sin is to make a man act wrong, and not by any means to render him incapable of acting at all. Other expressions also are used on the same subject, which are quite incompatible with a literal interpretation of this. As, for instance, in a passage which occurs Eph.

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v. 14, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." How can a man be at the same time both dead and asleep? Or, if he be literally dead, what is it short of absurdity to call him blind, or dull of hearing; or to ascribe to him either evil or good in any form? These and a few other difficulties must be surmounted, in order to establish a literal meaning of the passage before us; and, until this is done, we believe the view taken of it above cannot be impeached.

(3.) To the same class of expressions belong those which represent men as blind, or dull of hearing, or asleep: "The God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not. Their ears are dull of hearing. Awake, thou that sleepest," 2 Cor. iv. 4; Acts xxviii. 27; Eph. v. 14, No question will be raised, we suppose, as to the figurative character of this phraseology. Blindness, deafness, and sleep, are states of the body; to which, if any state of the mind be analogous at all, it can be only in part. So far as these terms express an existing state of insensibility, they may be applied with their utmost force to the state of a sinner's mind towards God; but, so far as they indicate an incapacity for action, the application of them to the state of a sinners's mind is forbidden by the known fact, that he is actually in the enjoyment of his rational and intelligent powers, which con-

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stitute his capacity. These expressions, therefore, denote nothing more than an existing state of inattention to divine things.

It may be observed in passing, that, although it is manifestly unwarrantable to make a literal use of the texts we have been examining, it is on such an application of them that their whole force, as used with great frequency by divines of a certain class, depends. Exhorting sinners has been seriously compared to going into a burying ground, and calling to the dead; just as though men under the influence of sin were literally dead, or dead in the whole sense of that term. What brave words may be built upon the most glaring fallacies!

It has often been imagined to be an inseparable difficulty in the way of maintaining human ability, that it involves an apparently express contradiction to the sacred scriptures, and much wonder seems to have been felt that the advocates of the sentiment have not been startled by so tremendous a necessity. An appearance of contradiction, however, results necessarily and in all cases from the use of analogical language. For example, the bible affirms that God is a sun and shield; yet who would hesitate to say that God is *not* either a sun or a shield? Of bread Christ declared that it was his body; yet we maintain without scruple that the sacramental bread is *not* the body of Christ. Do we feel guilty in either

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of these cases of contradicting the word of God? Certainly not. Whenever words are used out of their strict reference, they are true in one sense and false in another; and necessarily so, because it pertains to such a use of words to retain only a part of their ordinary meaning. Thus it may be said of the declaration "No man can come unto me," that, if the word can be analogically used in it, as we have endeavoured to show, it is true in one sense, and in another it is false. Take such part of the ordinary meaning of the word cannot as the analogy in the case justifies, and it is true; but take such part as is not justified by the existing analogy, and you make a new assertion, one which Christ never intended, and this assertion is false. Seeming contradictions are thus, when properly understood, harmonious truths. God both is and is not a sun and shield; bread both is and is not the body of Christ; man both can and cannot turn to God; conversion is both possible and impossible with men; sinners are at the same time both dead and alive. The one series of these assertions is true figuratively, and the other is true literally. When I say God is not a sun, it is no way contradictory of the text which declares that he is one, because that text is meant to intimate only that in some respects he is like one. And when I say men can come to Christ, it is equally remote from opposition to his affirmation that they cannot, because the only

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intended meaning of those words is that they certainly will not, they being in this respect like men that cannot.

If it be true, therefore, that the terms in question are figuratively or analogically employed, we are running no hazard by a merely apparent contradiction of them. It is no real contradiction; but, in fact, is absolutely necessary in order to set these passages of scripture in their true light. It has been reprobated as, if not incorrect, at least unguarded, to affirm in an unqualified manner that men can come to Christ, because Christ expressly declares that they cannot. Let us only suppose that the same principle had been acted upon in reference to those other words of his, which are entitled to at least equal reverence, "This is my body;" that no person should ever have dared to say bread was not his body, because he expressly affirmed that it was: what would have been the result? The doctrine of transubstantiation would not have been exploded to the present day. And a similar mischief is now resulting from an unwillingness to affirm that men can come to Christ; it allows and encourages men to suppose that they literally and truly cannot; it conceals the very important fact of the limited import of the term in this connexion; and so renders our over-scrupulous regard to the letter of God's word subversive of

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its real meaning, and conducive to the propagation of pernicious and destructive error.

3. Having disposed of the passages which have been conceived to indicate a want of power as the operating cause in a sinner's impenitence, and endeavoured to show that they express nothing more than the fixedness of his determination, we may proceed to notice some by which the latter idea is directly conveyed.

(1.) We may be permitted briefly to refer again to the texts already quoted, which affirm that sinners will not come to God through Christ. "Ye *will not* come unto me that ye might have life. How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not*. Ye would none of my reproof," John v. 40; Matt. xxiii. 27; Prov. i. 25. Here is no metaphor. The words are used in their literal sense, and must be taken strictly to mean that men's determination not to come to Christ is the reason why they do not come. But if so, it cannot be true that they are unable; for in that case their inability would be the reason, or at least a part of the reason, why they did not come.

(2.) Another class of expressions may here be noticed. "Because I have called and *ye refused*, I have stretched out my hand, and no man re-

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garded, but *ye have set at naught* all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. For that they *hated* knowledge, and did *not choose* the fear of the Lord. Seeing *ye put away from you* the word of God," Prov. i. 24, 25, 29; Acts xiii. 46. It is clearly stated in these texts that men's impenitence is of the nature of a refusal, a setting at naught, or a putting away of the gospel message. Now, these acts arise from a state of the mind, and from their own nature can arise from nothing else. That non-performance of a thing which arises from want of power is never called a refusal, nor can it be so without a flagrant absurdity. It seems evident, therefore, that the only cause operating to prevent men from coming to Christ is the state of their minds, which, according to the definitions laid down in the outset, is totally distinct and widely different from a want of power.

(3.) Phraseology of similar import occurs in John iii. 19, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." The truth here inculcated is, that men continue in spiritual ignorance because they prefer it to spiritual knowledge; they love darkness rather than light. But could it be said of a blind man that he did not see because he would rather not see? Surely, if a man's spiritual ignorance arises from preference, it cannot be held at

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the same time to arise from incapacity; because, if he were incapable, there could be no opportunity for preference to be exercised. The act of preference between two objects necessarily implies a power of choice respecting both.

(4.) We may notice also the language of the apostle, 1 Cor. ii. 14: "The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This passage has often been cited against us; but under an entire misapprehension of its meaning. If, indeed, the apostle have asserted that, unless a man be spiritual, or of a right disposition, he cannot understand the gospel, it is a very grave matter; but, as on the one hand, it would be very difficult to reconcile such a sentiment with other parts of scripture, so there is abundant reason to be satisfied that it has no existence here. A regard to the context will fully show that the apostle is speaking, not merely of knowing the gospel, but of receiving, or enjoying it. His assertion is, therefore, that the natural man, or man alienated from God, cannot delight in the things of God, because a congruity of mind is necessary to such a result. We know that there are many things, or, to speak more strictly, many properties of things, which we relish more or less according to the state of the mind. A miser does not enjoy the happiness of liberality, nor a voluptuary the

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pleasures of beneficence. The things of God are pre-eminently of this kind. The glory of God, the excellence of his law, the sinfulness of sin, the awfulness of eternity, and all things else pertaining to salvation, have the property of being relished according to the state of the mind. But, inasmuch as the state of the mind is the only impediment to such enjoyment, the absence of it is by this passage distinctly referred to a want of congeniality, and not to a want of power.

(5.) There is another passage deserving of notice, in which our Lord plainly states the cause which induces him to say that men cannot come to him to be of a strictly voluntary kind. John v. 44: "How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another?" There is no compulsion upon sinners, we suppose, to attach an undue importance to the honour which cometh from men. It is nothing more than the state of their minds which induces them to do so; yet it was as influenced by this disposition that our Lord declared they could not believe. The inference seems to be irresistible, that nothing but the state of their minds prevented their believing.

(6.) To these references may be added Luke viii. 15; where, in the parable of the sower, the fruitfulness of the word is ascribed to its being "received into an honest and good heart." All that is necessary to the efficacy of divine truth,

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therefore, is a right state of mind: and if so, there is no want of additional power.

The fact which we conceive to be established by the passages which have now gone under review is this; that the scriptures uniformly represent a sinner's impenitence as resulting, not from a want of power, but exclusively from a want of disposition. We conclude, therefore, that disposition is wanting, and power is not. Had power been wanting, we could scarcely have searched the bible so far without finding some, we might rather say many and unequivocal indications of the fact.

CHAP. XII.

The argument from express words of scripture concluded.

III. ANOTHER class of scriptures illustrative of the point under consideration, may be found in those which describe the nature of the change wrought in the conversion of a sinner. The work effected in this case must of course correspond with the previous impediment to conversion. Now, the scriptures speak frequently of this work; and uniformly represent it as lying in an alteration, not of the power possessed, but of the state of heart, or disposition. The following passages may serve as a specimen.

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Ezek. xxxvi. 26. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh." A new heart here evidently means a new state of heart, or disposition, as appears from the following phrase, a new spirit; and the beautiful metaphor which closes the verse conveys the same sentiment under a different form. Here is no reference to power.

Psalm cx. 2. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." By the day of power in this passage, of course, we understand the period when the blessed Spirit operates savingly on the heart; and when he does so, the making of a sinner willing is declared to be the nature of his work. Could this have been said if it were the Spirit's work to give power?

John vi. 44. "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." The use of the word draw in this passage is worthy of observation. Drawing, or inducing, is a process not any way adapted to the need of a man who has no power; it pertains rather to one who wants inclination. The work of the Spirit denoted by this word must be the gracious influence exercised upon the heart of a sinner, sweetly overcoming his hitherto cherished resistance, and making him willing in the day of power.

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Acts xvi. 14. "The Lord opened Lydia's heart, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul." The work of the Spirit as here described consisted not in communicating power, but in opening the heart, or producing a readiness to attend to the truth. Lydia must have had power to do this before, or else she could not have done it merely in consequence of such a change.

If the change produced in the conversion of a sinner were giving him power to repent, such language as this would surely be adapted to mislead. Not a single passage that we are aware of can be adduced to show that the Spirit of God confers on a sinner the power of repentance. Yet, if power were wanting, he infallibly must do so; and, if he really did this, so important a part of his work would certainly not have been overlooked.

It will probably occur to the reader that the operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion is compared to a new birth, and even to a new creation, John iii. 3; 2 Cor. v. 17. This language has been conceived to indicate the production of new powers, as well as of new action. As it is manifest, however, that these are but comparisons, so, according to what has already been stated, it is necessary to observe the true extent of the analogy subsisting between the objects compared. Birth and creation, it will be ad-

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mitted, do involve the production of new powers; but, when these terms are applied to the conversion of a sinner, we are immediately met by the fact that the powers of moral action in man are already in existence. Here is no room, therefore, for the production of new powers; and hence, of necessity, the analogy and the force of the metaphor are confined to the production of new action. Now, the production of new action in the mind is identical with a change of disposition, disposition being the source of habitual and permanent action. To which it may be added, that the change in character and conduct subsequent upon a change of disposition, or of the habitually prevalent state of the heart, in the case of a sinner towards God, is of quite sufficient magnitude and extent to justify the application of the phrases under examination. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

In a few instances may be observed the same analogical use of terms respecting conversion, which prevails so largely in reference to the impenitence of man. So the apostle says, "I thank God, who hath enabled me." But it is manifest that the word enabled refers to an operation on the state of his mind, and indicates only the production of a particular disposition.

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Among the passages adduced in this controversy by those who differ from us, we have observed many which simply state the fact that salvation is of the Lord; that his people are made willing in the day of his power; that all Zion's children are taught of the Lord; and are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of God, Psalm iii. 8, cx. 3; Isa. liv. 13; John i. 13.

Undoubtedly these are highly important and decisive passages, as to the fact that the conversion of a sinner is in every case produced by divine influence; a fact to the cordial admission of which by the author the present volume bears ample and unequivocal testimony. But how does the assertion of this fact bear upon the question at issue? Here are two causes supposed, namely, the inability and the aversion of man, either of which will operate to render the Spirit's influence necessary to the conversion of a sinner; whichever of them may be conceived to be in operation, therefore, the necessity of that influence is consistently maintained, and consequently the fact that conversion never takes place but by virtue of it. Texts of scripture which merely assert this assert an important truth, but they contain nothing which affects the point under discussion. This ground is occupied in common by both parties in the dispute, and is quite remote from the field in which the

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contest is to be decided. The introduction of these passages may excite the more observation, because they have often been brought forward with great ostentation, and exhibited with much parade of scripture proof, as though they alone were decisive of the controversy; while, in fact, this proceeding indicates nothing more than an entire misunderstanding of the subject, unless it should be taken as discovering too, what we are very unwilling to suspect, a wish to depreciate an argument by raising a prejudice against those who advance it.

The import and bearing of holy scripture in other aspects has been, or yet will be, noticed in other parts of this volume. It has been our object here to observe the passages which bear upon our subject directly, and to show that they are in unison with the general argument; which we trust has been satisfactorily done. It would occasion the writer the deepest affliction, if, however unconsciously, he should have been led by these remarks to alter or to diminish the full and true import of the divine word; and unutterably would he be ashamed of himself, if he could harbour a wish to evade, in however unwelcome a direction, the force of truth: but as, on the one hand, he hopes he has no aim but to know the mind of Christ; so, on the other, he solemnly believes what he has stated to be the correct expression of that mind, so far as the passages

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examined are concerned. He has not, perhaps, adduced every text on which stress has been laid in this discussion; but those which have been brought forward he hopes are fair specimens of the classes to which they belong, and sufficient to establish and illustrate the principles on which the whole are to be interpreted. Nothing is more true or more important than the sentiment, that the express and direct sense of scripture, wherever it can be ascertained, must determine every matter of religious opinion; but the case before us is one in which this very maxim has been made the foundation and the bulwark of an extensive and long prevalent error. The declaration that men cannot come to Christ having been once supposed to mean that they have no power to do so, the force with which this is asserted seems to have attached to the mistake a most unmerited character of sacredness and inviolability. Whatever might be disputed, this must not be called in question, because it was expressly asserted, and he who would dare to suggest a doubt of it could not but incur the heaviest accusations of heterodoxy. Slender basis for so vast a superstructure! Upon what films can wide-spread errors be established! The whole is but an oversight, a mere inadvertency, in misinterpreting analogical phraseology as though it were literal, and thus throwing out of view other portions of the divine word, a due regard to which would

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instantly have dispelled the delusion. The writer yields to no man in his willingness to submit to the sense of the scriptures: he has no higher aim than to ascertain the mind of the Spirit therein. If he contends against what has long been held to be such, it is because he is convinced that it is a mistake; and he calls upon his brethren opposed to him in argument to abide by their own principle, and to vindicate their claim to a supreme veneration for God's word. Which do they love best—their system, which they have long imagined the word of God to support; or the word of God, which they may now perceive leaves their system to its fall? The writer hopes and believes the latter; but the result will declare it.

CHAP. XIII.

Whether the sentiment which ascribes power to man does not pre-eminently humble the sinner and glorify God:—the argument from the tendency of the doctrine.

If we were to say that the apparent tendency of a sentiment should in all cases be held decisive of its real character and truth, we should doubtless be going too far. With our limited and imperfect knowledge, we may not always be

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competent judges on such a point; we may ourselves be misled by error, or blinded by our feelings. Yet there are grounds on which an inquiry into the tendency of an opinion is both reasonable and important. Everything which is just in sentiment must also be right in tendency; rectitude in sentiment being nothing more than a view of things as they really exist, and things as they really exist being adapted by divine wisdom to exert a right influence on the heart. If an opinion, therefore, according to its legitimate use, tends apparently to evil, this is presumptive evidence of its fallacy; as, on the other hand, there is a presumption in favour of its truth if it tends to good. Though this is not to be considered as a principal argument, it is an important auxiliary one; and it is proper that every sentiment should be brought to this test, as a help towards ascertaining its character.

With respect to the accordance of religious opinions with the truth of the gospel in this point, we have considerable facility of judgment. The divine dispensation of mercy has very distinct and peculiar features. Its aspect is by no means vague or equivocal. By virtue of its boundless condescension and riches of grace, its tendency is manifestly to abase man and to exalt his Maker. To the former is allotted shame and confusion of face, deep criminality and ill-desert; to the latter is ascribed unbounded

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and self-moved love, as the sole spring of all that is happy for man or excellent in him. It is an easy and effectual mode, therefore, of bringing a doctrine to the test, to ask what is its tendency. Does it abase the sinner? Does it glorify God? Does it breathe the acknowledged spirit of his dispensation of grace?

The writer cannot help picturing to himself the surprise which one class of his readers may feel, at his bringing the doctrine he has endeavoured to maintain to the test now described; or the joy which may be felt by others, in the anticipation of his approaching discomfiture. There is scarcely a point in which our brethren who oppose the sentiment of man's ability imagine themselves so strong as in this. They conceive that the notion we advocate tends to exalt the creature; and they take this to be so entirely beyond doubt, that on this ground its condemnation is with them already past. They may be assured, however, that they proceed too rapidly. With the semblance of an impregnable fortress, they have no real strength. We have not the least unwillingness to bring our doctrine to this test; on the contrary, we are very desirous of it, being fully convinced that the result will be eminently in its favour. If it do not tend to humble man and to glorify God, let it perish and be forgotten!

I. Let us then recall the sentiment itself, that

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our view of it may be accurate. We maintain that man, in his present condition, possesses power to be what he ought to be, understanding by power the means of being so. In order to guard against the perplexity which may arise from the frequent analogical use of the word power, it may perhaps be better to use the word means, as strictly of the same import. Our inquiry is, first, whether the idea that man possesses the means of being what he ought to be tends to exalt or humble him.

Now it appears evident that the ascription to man of means of being what he ought to be, must have the effect of exhibiting him as guilty if he is not what he ought to be. Even upon the supposition of our brethren (which, however, we do not admit), that man may be guilty in some measure though he have no means of being otherwise than he is, it seems plain that if he have such means his guilt must be greater; and greatest of all according to the opinion which ascribes to him the amplest means. To say that a man does not love God when he cannot, may be to say a bad thing of him; but to say that he does not love God when he can, is surely to say of him something worse: or, which is the same thing, to affirm that man has power to love God is to represent him in a light which aggravates his guilt, and tends more deeply to abase him.

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Yet all we have maintained is that man has the means of being what he ought to be; an opinion which, instead of exalting a sinner, has so direct a tendency to humble him, that whoever desires to abase him most deeply should obviously maintain it with the greatest emphasis.

It can scarcely be less wonderful that this consequence should ever have been overlooked; but it may perhaps be ascribed to the influence of one or other of the following fallacies.

1. It may be thought by some that power is an excellency; and that to ascribe power to man is to ascribe goodness to him.

The error committed here lies in not observing the distinction between man as a creature, and man as a moral agent; or between natural and moral qualities. Looking at any creature, as such, the possession of power, or the means of action, is an excellency; and every increase of power adds to its excellency, inasmuch as it confers an adaptation for some superior kind of action. So the power of performing moral actions is an excellency in man, enabling him to do what other creatures cannot. But when we regard man as a moral agent, and ask wherein his excellency as such consists, it is not in power, but in the right use of power; not in having means of action, but in acting well. Power is a natural excellence, but not a moral one; an ex-

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cellence of structure, but not of character. It is excellence, but not goodness: and therefore to ascribe power to man is not to ascribe to him any goodness at all.

That this is the true idea of power, or means of action, may appear more fully from this, that the employment of it is not necessarily good. Power may be used for evil, and it is in many cases so used; so that it might in these cases be regarded as an evil itself. The fact is, however, that power has no moral character at all; it is neither evil nor good, but a mere instrument of action, by the varied employment of which good or evil character is formed and exhibited.

2. It may be alleged, perhaps, that, if power itself be not a moral excellency, power to do good must be so.

But what then is power to do good? According to our definition of power, it is the means of doing good, and nothing more. But is the possession of the means of doing good a moral excellency? A rich man has the means of being charitable; is this any goodness in him? If this question needs no answer, so neither does the following: A wicked man has the means of serving God; is this any goodness in him? The same principle decides both cases. The means of doing good constitute no moral excellency, but merely a natural one; and they may in fact be rendered only means of doing evil, by the neglect

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or misuse of them. When we say that man has power to do good, therefore, we do not ascribe to him any moral excellency.

4. It may be said that disposition is power, and disposition to do good is goodness.

Most certainly disposition to do good is goodness; but the reader will be kind enough to recollect that we do not allow power and disposition to be the same. If he is disposed to go over that ground again, we can only refer him to chap. ii. page 53.

4. It may be urged that all power is declared to be of God; and that, therefore, if power be ascribed to man, it is derogatory to the glory of God.

There is no doubt but all things are of God. Every creature is endowed by his hand with whatever faculties it possesses, and is entirely dependent upon him for their continuance. In this sense our power to act at all is of God; so likewise is our power to breathe, and our power to do evil as well as good. If, therefore, it is any way derogatory to God's honour to say that man has power to do good, it must be equally so to say that he has power to do evil, or to perform any of the functions of life. In fact, however, there is nothing dishonourable to God in either. Whatever powers God has given us we possess; and to say what powers we possess is to say in other words what powers God has given us. To describe man *as he is* implies no question as to his

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origin, nor any insinuation of his independent existence.

When the power by which man works righteousness is said to be of God, it is necessary to recollect the double import of the term. An application of the principle by which the use of words is to be ascertained, will show that the term power is here used analogically, not in reference to the means of acting, but to the disposition to act. And if this be the case, all language of this kind is remote from the question; as we do not ascribe to man any disposition to act right, but simply the means of doing so. The fact, therefore, that God gives man the disposition to serve him by a special communication of grace, argues nothing respecting the means of serving him which he still may or may not possess by nature.

To return from these digressions. In ascribing to man the means—that is, the power—of loving and serving God, we do nothing to exalt him, but everything to abase him. Let the sentiment we maintain be compared in this respect with that which is opposed to it. Affirm that man has no power to act right: does that abase him? It lowers him, indeed, by denying the principal attribute which raises him above the brutes, but it does not disgrace him; it sinks his nature, but it does not impugn his character. Upon this

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principle, in order to humble man more we should say that he has no power to think, none to reason, none to admire, none to be happy; and let us only go on in the same direction, and we may ultimately reduce him to an oyster or a zoophyte. Profoundly humiliating indeed! But all this while what charge of *guilt* is fixed on him? What *blame* is attached to him? Of what *criminality* does he stand convicted? Absolutely none. Every diminution of his power, on the contrary, removes him further from the possibility of being either evil or good, and, with the incapacity of an oyster, he attains also its innocence.

To deny power to man, therefore, is a preposterous method of attempting to abase him. But this is not all. The species of power which our brethren refuse to ascribe to man is precisely that which is necessary to his being humbled, and without a consciousness of which he can never feel any abasement at all. They affirm that man has not the power, or the means, of doing good, or of avoiding evil; in which case we maintain it to be impossible that a man should feel himself blameworthy, either for doing evil, or for not doing good. Whatever a man may be accused of, a sincere and honest conviction that he had not the means of doing otherwise always amounts to a full justification of himself in his own eyes, and must do so while his rational constitution remains

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unimpaired. Upon such a ground as this, therefore, no feeling of humiliation can ever arise.

The state of things which thus opens to us is truly admirable. Here are men who profess to hold doctrines abasing to the creature, and who cry down a contrary sentiment because it exalts him; while the doctrine they espouse annihilates the possibility of blame, and furnishes the sinner with a complete justification; and that which they oppose, not only carries the guilt of the sinner to the highest pitch, but affords the only ground on which he can be convicted of criminality at all. Under what infatuation can it be, that, professing to maintain the deep criminality of transgression, they seize upon that on which the very existence of criminality depends, and strive to blot it out alike from the records of truth, and from the conscience of man? Allow that man has power to choose his character and conduct, and you may hold him blameworthy; deny this, and, let him be what he may, he is innocent. Yet this is the very thing which is singled out for denial. That is the doctrine, therefore, which exalts the creature; for it enables him to look with complacency on his heart and life, with all their iniquities; to justify himself, notwithstanding all the accusations of the law of God; and even to lift up his head with insult in the presence of his Maker and his judge. Ours is the doctrine to abase man, and is the only doctrine which attaches to him a particle

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of real criminality. If he has power to serve God, then disobedience is a crime—the sinner himself cannot but allow it to be so, and a crime fully proportionate to the vastness of his obligations.

Let the influence of the two sentiments be embodied in two hypothetical cases. Let us imagine that we hear one person in a soliloquy of the following kind. "They tell me that I have sinned. They speak awfully of my breaking God's commandments, and of the punishment hereafter to be inflicted upon me. They say I ought to be deeply ashamed of myself; but I could not help it. Sin is natural to me. It is in my constitution, and I have no power to be otherwise than I am. If I am to be otherwise than I am, therefore, the Lord must make me so. It is unreasonable to blame *me;* for I have done the very best I could, and certainly cannot blame myself."

We have carefully avoided in this case the use of all strong expressions, lest we should be supposed to have overcharged the picture. Let us now hear a soliloquy of a different kind. "I know that I ought to love God and to serve him; that I can do both; and that, with due consideration of his word, I should have done both ere now. It is certain that I have never meditated seriously on the contents of the bible. I have bent my attention to the world; I have

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voluntarily avoided everything adapted to render me serious; I have cherished an aversion to God and his ways; I have said to him, Depart from me. I have thus wilfully neglected the means of loving him. The heart which I could have given to him I have given to another. Affections which might have been engaged for him have been willingly enlisted against him, till now I hate him and his ways. Wretch that I am! Who shall express the depth of my wickedness? Is it thus that I have treated God when he called me? Is it thus I have hardened my heart against those glorious truths, which, if I had but duly meditated on them, would have melted me into gratitude and love? How justly may he look on me with anger! How righteously will his indignation burn against me, even to the lowest hell! How bitterly must I reproach myself, as voluntary in my deepest guilt, and as the author of my own ruin! O thou, my Maker and judge! wherewithal shall I come before thee? By what arguments can my conduct be justified, or by what excuses can it be extenuated?"

The reader, of course, will judge whether the natural tendency of the doctrines in question has been now fairly represented. He may easily satisfy himself that these are not fictitious cases. Let him observe the many persons around him who are not of a contrite spirit, and inquire why it is that a load of guilt like theirs occasions them

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no grief, and he will often have for answer, "I cannot help it; you know I cannot do any better of myself." If, on the other hand, he should ever meet with one who holds this unwelcome sentiment of man's ability, he may be reckless about sin on other grounds, but he will always say, "Well, I know I am to be blamed." Such is the influence of the two sentiments in fact; and it may not be going too far to say, that, of all the errors working mischief in the heart of man, the notion of his own inability is incomparably the most prolific source of self-complacency and religious unconcern.

II. Having seen how the doctrine of man's ability tends to abase the creature, let us now inquire, in the second place, whether it tends to glorify the Creator.

We may begin by remarking generally, that God is glorified in exactly the same proportion as man is abased; the quantity of shame and confusion of face belonging to the sinner being the precise measure of the grace exercised by the Saviour. If there were no sin there could be no grace; and, by whatever degree sin is magnified, in the same proportion is grace glorified. Whatever sentiment, therefore, most humbles the sinner, most glorifies God; but we have already seen that the doctrine of man's ability most humbles the sinner, and we may conclude, therefore, that it will also most glorify God.

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But to go into particulars. The glory of God in salvation, or that aspect of his glory pertaining to the present argument, consists in its being regarded as an act of grace, free, sovereign, and infinite. The true idea of grace seems to be that of undeserved bounty, kindness to the unworthy; and the degree of grace manifested obviously accords with the degree of unworthiness in the objects of it. To say that grace is free and sovereign, is to say that there is nothing in the objects of it adapted to excite it; but that it springs solely from God's own bosom, and is regulated in its exercise by his own good pleasure.

The question respecting the glory of God in salvation, therefore, resolves itself into one respecting the unworthiness of man. Is man undeserving of the kindness of God? Is he utterly undeserving of it, without anything, of whatever nature, adapted to induce it? Is his character fitted rather to repel divine mercy, and to inflame just indignation? Is his criminality so great as to render it a matter of endless wonder that he should ever be forgiven?

Let us first see how these questions can be answered, on the supposition that man has not power to be what he ought to be. The case then is simply that of a person who has fallen into some calamity without the means of avoiding it, and consequently without any fault on his part.

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It may certainly be deemed kind to render assistance in such a case; and, if this is the whole that God has done, we would be very far from insinuating that it is not kind, since any regard to creatures must be in him a matter of infinite condescension. Nor will we here stop to inquire whether kindness of such a description confers an eminent lustre on the character of a benefactor; whether it could furnish just occasion of exalted encomium; whether it be more than accordant with the universal law of loving our neighbour as ourselves; or whether the omission of such a service would not attach a stigma difficult to be removed. Our object rather is to show, that, whatever grace may have been manifested on the supposition of man's impotency, much more has been exercised on the supposition of his power.

If it be true that man has power to be and to do all that he ought, to love God supremely, to delight in him, and to serve him with all his heart, then the case is a very different one from that just exhibited. Whatever may be the wretchedness into which he may have fallen, and whatever its adaptation may be in itself to inspire compassion, this aspect of man's character towards God has a tendency to repress such a feeling. Why should his Maker rescue him? Has he not been his Maker's enemy? With ample powers for his service, has he not wilfully devoted them to the world, and trampled alike upon the com-

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mands and the mercies, the glory and the terrors, of the Almighty? What favours has he not abused! What dishonour has he not aimed to inflict! And all this when he had power to do otherwise; when God had set before him the most moving truths, the consideration of which would have sweetly drawn him to love; but he would not incline his ear, neither would he hearken. Shall God save such a one? Shall not his soul be avenged on such a rebel as this? For such a wretch shall his arm be stretched out, and his Son be slain? This is a miracle of grace indeed. Love which prevails while crimes of the deepest dye provoke eternal wrath, and while justice demands the execution of a righteous vengeance—such love *is* free; it *may be* sovereign, and *must be* glorious. Such love is worthy of the Eternal; and if earth and heaven be called upon to shout its praise, the theme is infinitely higher than the song.

The writer cannot believe it needful to carry this illustration any further. He will leave it to appeal to every pious mind, only expressing his heartfelt delight that the sentiments he holds do lead him to most admiring views of the grace that bringeth salvation. O! if he felt that there were any sentiments which could sink him in deeper shame before the presence of his Maker, or inspire more elevated apprehensions of his Redeemer's love, were it for this luxury

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alone, he would instantly embrace them. It is for this reason, in truth, that he binds his present sentiments to his heart. None humble him like these; none like these inspire him with adoration of his Lord.

If a reader of the opposite persuasion should feel any force in the preceding argument, it may perhaps lead him to say—'But, after all, the great question is, Is the sentiment true? Is it scriptural?' No doubt, this is the great question; and he will have the goodness to recollect how fully it has been treated in the former parts of this volume. It is not that we have examined our opinion in this indirect manner, in order to avoid the direct application of scriptural tests; but, having first applied them, we use this as a subsidiary means; and, as the former justified us, so does the latter. It should be recollected also, that we are now upon ground which our companions in argument have claimed as peculiarly their own, and from which, as their impregnable bulwark, they have loudly proclaimed our defeat. We wish no triumph, neither let them practise any evasion; but let it be fairly decided which sentiment has the advantage on the ground now occupied. Nothing is easier than for a man, who is determined to maintain his opinion at all hazards, when baffled at one point to run to another, and so to lead an everlasting chase: but, if there be any sincerity in the reference so

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often made to the tendency of the doctrine, we call upon our brethren either to show that it is not such as we have stated, or to abandon, if not their opinion, yet their boast; and to content themselves with being that portion of the christian church who hold sentiments which justify man, and annihilate the grace of God.

CHAP. XIV.

Whether the sentiment of man's ability agrees with the actual exercises of his mind:—the argument from experience.

It can scarcely fail to have occurred to our readers, that the subject before us is by no means one, either of abstract speculation, or of remote inquiry. It relates to matters which lie within our own breasts; to matters, therefore, respecting which our own consciousness should afford us the means of forming a ready and decisive judgment. One can scarcely withhold surprise that, on so home a topic, there should have existed either diversity of opinion or scope for argument; and, if it does exist, it is natural and just to refer to every man's consciousness of what passes within him for a decision of the question. Whatever may be the value of philosophical disquisitions, whatever may be the force even of divine testimony, they are of no further

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influence or truth than as they accord with the facts existing in the bosom of men. The use and end of them is not to produce a fictitious man, but to discover the real one; not to form a picture, but to exhibit a light. Respecting the whole question in the discussion of which we have been engaged, we say most cheerfully, Let experience decide it.

Much is it to be regretted that any circumstance should diminish the value of this appeal. Some readers, perhaps, under the influence of their own consciousness, may be ready to say that, on this ground, there cannot be two opinions, at least among those who are taught of God. The expectation is natural, but the fact does not justify it. There *are* two opinions, even among those who are taught of God; unless, indeed, the parties in this discussion proceed to the extreme length of pronouncing each other not to be christians—an anathema which, from angry and defeated disputants, is no way uncommon, but which, in this case, we will not suppose to be hurled on either side. Since, then, those who have alike experienced divine teaching do not come to a perfect agreement upon this point, it is manifest that the appeal to experience cannot be made in the rapid and decisive manner which might have been anticipated. We shall need to advance with caution and discrimination. We shall, however, need no more

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than this. The ground for the appeal to experience is not at all affected by the different views which may be taken of it. No doubt can be entertained that the inward exercises of all true christians, though greatly diversified, are substantially the same; and that they are spoken of in dissimilar terms, only because those terms are employed with more or less strictness and accuracy. We have seen already that a lax and unobservant use of words is the origin of many of the doctrinal perplexities involved in the present discussion; and we need not be at all surprised to find the same cause operating to disguise and distort the exercises of the heart. Let us only rectify these inadvertencies; let us but ask candidly what certain phrases mean, and reduce them fairly to their correct import, and then we shall hear distinctly what the testimony of experience really is.

Before we proceed to inquire of those to whom the Lord has been gracious, we wish to ask a few questions of the ungodly themselves. Of such among them as would affirm that they have ability for their duty, we have no need here to speak; whether correct or not, their testimony is at all events on our side. We refer now to those who say they cannot do as they ought; language which is very often heard from some persons, especially when they have been induced to make any of those abortive religious efforts

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with which the lives of many abound. Supposing the reader to be cherishing such a sentiment, we use the freedom of addressing him personally, and say—What do you mean when you declare that you cannot love God, or repent of sin? What hinders you? The question perhaps may startle and perplex you; you may be disposed to reply to it by saying again that you cannot, and that you cannot tell why; but we must repeat our inquiry. If you cannot repent, something hinders you, and something which may be discovered, if you will look closely and speak honestly. What is it? Judge if we are not right in saying, that it is your love of sin, of the world, and of self-indulgence. This makes you dread the influence of religious truths, and deeply disrelish the consideration of them. You know there is no other hindrance. You could love and serve God, if your own heart—that is, if you yourself—were willing. But, if this be the case, then you have power to do it; for, if you had not, you could not do it although you were willing.

If you still say, But how can I help the state of my heart, or my averseness to repent, we answer, that you have the means of altering the state of your heart by the due consideration of religious truths. *Consider*, and you will be wise. Your experience will confirm this representation. For we ask, Have you ever given to

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religious truths the serious and practical consideration which you knew they deserved? If you have not, how can you say that such consideration would not have converted you? Again, have religious truths ever been seriously thought of by you without producing some effect, and an effect proportionate to the degree of consideration you may have given them? How else are we to account for the hours of anxiety, the bursts of sorrow, the occasional prayers and purposes of amendment, which your memory will readily recall? And, if this be the case, as we are satisfied it is, it may fairly be reckoned a decisive proof that due consideration would have converted you, and that by this instrument you have the means of changing your own heart. Further; How have religious truths at any time failed to influence you, or lost the influence which they were beginning to exert upon you? You know that it has been by inconsideration. When they were brought before you, you took no pains to weigh them, but rather willingly forgot them, or perhaps indulged yourself in some method of taking off their force; and, when they had made you in some measure serious or unhappy, the impression was lost by forgetfulness, if not by a method more flagrantly criminal. We are not afraid of your experience contradicting these statements; and, if it do not, we have its unequivocal testimony to the sentiment that

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every man possesses ability for his duty. You, at least, possess ability for yours.

In harmony with the principle we are maintaining are those well attested instances in which conversion has more manifestly been induced by reflection. We hear, for example, of a traveller at an inn engaging to reward a servant, if she will promise to spend in prayer a quarter of an hour every day till his return; and of a dying mother in India, who enjoined her son to spend half an hour every morning in solitary reflection. In both these cases conversion resulted; and there are doubtless many similar ones. These are direct testimonies to the adaptation and power of religious truth to affect the heart whenever it is duly regarded; and they authorize the broad assertion, that it is impossible for any man to continue in sin, who steadily contemplates the motives which are adapted to win him from it—he must disregard them, or he will infallibly repent.

Perfectly accordant with this view is the language of holy writ, in which we suppose every true christian will be ready to describe his own conversion: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies," Psalm cxix. 59. Thoughtfulness is the first of all hopeful signs; and it will be fully admitted, we imagine, that conversion commences and is carried on by the influence of clear, vivid, and powerful views of

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divine things, that is to say, by having the attention deeply engaged on them. Then what was seldom thought of becomes ever present, it cannot be forgotten; and the more intently it is dwelt upon the deeper becomes the conviction of its importance, and the more decided its influence upon the heart.

Let us now request a devout reader to examine how it is with him in his closet. On his entrance there it may be conceived that he finds a painful degree of worldly-mindedness and insensibility to divine things, much deadness of heart, and perhaps an entanglement of his affections with some sinful object. An hour spent in fervent exercises of secret piety awakens his heart, destroys the fascination of sin, and brings him near to God. But what are the exercises which have produced this result? They are greatly diversified, no doubt; but they are in substance only two, meditation and prayer—one grand object of prayer also being that the heart may be enlarged and quickened in meditation. The great power of religious retirement lies in its adaptation to set before us the glories of the world to come, to exhibit them distinctly, and to engage on them a full and solemn attention. To this point the labours of closet piety are mainly directed, and only so far as it is attained is any benefit derived from them. Hence the value and importance of the perusal of the divine word, of

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examination of the heart, of a review of the Lord's dealings with us, and of an observation of our ever varying circumstances; and hence, in truth, one great part of the value of prayer itself; which, above all other exercises, brings us into close contact with eternal realities, or cuttingly convicts us of our thoughtlessness in the very presence of those awful things by which our whole hearts ought to be absorbed. If there be any particular object to be attained, as, for example, some special sin to be mortified, we look at it in the various lights in which its guilt, ingratitude, folly, and mischief, appear most conspicuous; when these fix our attention strongly, the resolution to mortify that sin is produced and confirmed, and not till then. It is the same in every other case; and it is wholly on this principle that we rest the truth of the general sentiment, which universal experience confirms, that the vigour and growth of piety are always proportionate to the extent and liveliness of its secret exercises, or, in other words, to the attention engaged by the objects to which piety itself relates.

It may perhaps be observed, that we have hitherto made no mention of those gracious aids of the Spirit, which are exerted in conversion, and are enjoyed in devotional retirement; and we may even be asked whether our plan leaves any room for them. Our answer is briefly this; We

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entertain the fullest conviction that all holy emotions and enlargement of heart in meditation arise from the influence of the Holy Spirit, and are never enjoyed without it. We conceive, however, that his work is not to render meditation effectual to touch the heart, which it would do without him, and must do from the very constitution of man; but to induce meditation itself, to fix our thoughts intently on divine things, which we never should do without him. His office, as described in holy writ, is to "take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us," John xvi. 14. The import of many of the petitions we address to him is, that he will "turn away our eyes from beholding vanity," and not suffer vain thoughts to lodge within us, Psalm cxix. 37. And such is his actual course of proceeding; for, whenever he does produce deep exercises of heart, it is by enlarged views of sacred objects. The use thus made by the Spirit himself of consideration, as the instrument for accomplishing all his purposes in the conversion, consolation, and sanctification of men, is a manifest proof of its adequacy and certain efficacy: as, on the one hand, it is impossible to conceive he would employ an instrument not fitted for its end, so, on the other, it is evident that the instrument answers all the ends for which he employs it. Let but the same instrument be similarly employed, it matters not by what hand, and it will produce the same result.

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Hence may be seen, therefore, the relation and the consistency between the asserted ability of man and the aid of the Spirit. The Spirit does nothing more than lead us to due consideration; but we are able to give due consideration to any object without the Spirit; wherefore we have power, without the Spirit, to do that which we actually do only under his influence. The only instrument which the Spirit uses is one which we also have power to use; wherefore we have also power to accomplish all that is wrought by it; the sole reason why we do not being our aversion to the use of the only instrument by which it can be effected.

If it should be thought that the province thus assigned to the blessed Spirit is too small and insignificant, let any christian observant of his own mind ask himself whether he can in fact ascribe to him any more. We do not hesitate for a moment to ascribe to this blessed agent all our consolation, our sanctification, our heavenly mindedness, and every other good thing; but we conceive that he produces them by means of the truth; and the real question is, whether he effects these gracious results with or without this instrumentality. Whatever good work he carries on in the heart, is it not by the divine word, exhibited and applied for this purpose? Such is the tenor of our Saviour's prayer—"Sanctify them *through thy truth*, thy word is truth," John xvii. 17; and

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such, we believe, is the uniform testimony of christian experience. Now, if the work of the Spirit is carried on by the word of truth, it must be carried on also by the understanding and consideration of man, which form the only avenue by which the truth can reach or affect the heart. Besides, when we say that the office of the Spirit is to lead to consideration, we say a thing by no means insignificant, but very much the reverse; for, in relation to the formation of character and the determination of conduct, consideration is everything. He who can fix my attention upon various objects according to his pleasure, has the key of my inmost heart, and, so far as those objects are adapted to exert an influence, can mould it to his will. Nor is it so small a matter as may be supposed. Let any man try his strength at this occupation, and see how much he can do towards fixing the attention of a person on subjects to which he is averse, or even indifferent, and he will soon learn how little it is. Above all, let him try to engage the close and continued regard of a wicked man to the things of religion, and he will ere long acknowledge that it is no trifling task, that it altogether exceeds the resources of human power, and, little as it seems, is highly worthy of the almighty and glorious agent who condescends to perform the deed.

Here we may perhaps be met by the suggestion, that among the first lessons of divine wisdom is

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that of our own helplessness. Most cordially do we concur in this sentiment. It *is* among the earliest truths that the Spirit teaches; he who has not learned it is wanting in the very elements of spiritual knowledge, and, if there were any system with which this should be found to be uncongenial, it would be effectually refuted by this circumstance alone. We are not altogether strangers to the *feeling* of helplessness, and the deep anguish with which, not only an awakened sinner, but a true christian, often acknowledges that, like a helpless captive, he can do nothing. As to holy exercises apart from the influence of the Spirit, we daily feel them to be impossible; nor do we think that any persons use these terms either with more freeness, or with more force, than ourselves. But we have already seen that the use of these terms is by no means decisive of the question at issue. They have a twofold use, and a twofold meaning. It requires therefore to be asked what we mean by them; and this is the more necessary, because only one of their significations is at all appropriate to the connexion in which they are employed. Some persons tell us that, when they use these expressions, they mean to acknowledge that they are without power to do what is good; others, and ourselves among them, by the same language mean that their hearts have a fixed opposition to it. If we are complained of for using the language in this sense, we not only

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justify ourselves, but make the same complaint against our brethren; for, in truth, we use the terms in their usual sense, and in the only sense which they can rightly bear. We have already established the principle, that, when these words are applied to a state of mind, they invariably denote determination and not power; and we hold it to be certain that, in this connexion, they do refer to a state of mind, and nothing else: in the case before us, therefore, they can mean nothing but a fixed determination, and persons who use them to denote an imagined want of power are guilty, both of a flagrant perversion of language, and of endeavouring to express what really does not exist.

For, when the matter comes to be examined, it will be found that, with whatever force we may use the terms cannot and impossible, we do not really mean that we are destitute of power. Suppose me to say, in heartfelt bitterness, 'Wretch that I am! How little do I mourn for sin, or love the Saviour! I cannot mourn, I cannot love. As soon may the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as I, who have been long doing evil, learn to do well!' What is the real case which I thus describe? It is the intensity of a certain state of mind, and nothing more; a case, therefore, from which the idea of power is altogether remote. I mean only, that my feelings are desperately opposed to sorrow for

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sin and love to Christ. Neither is it a case which we are without the power—that is, the means—of altering. Due consideration of the truths adapted to produce sorrow for sin and love to Christ will produce them. Hence accordingly, if we really wish to possess these feelings, we betake ourselves to this very means; as though we should say, 'Come, my soul, look at those heart-rending iniquities which grieve thee so little, and lift up thine eyes to the glorious Redeemer whom thou hast found it so hard to love! Wilt thou never melt?' It is in the midst of such exercises as these that the heart is subdued; nor does it ever yield by any other means than the contemplation, in some method or other, of truths adapted to produce the effect. We may confidently appeal to every christian to say, whether the awakening and increase of devotional feeling is not always proportionate to the exercise of of sacred meditation.

To this it may be added, that, if it were strictly true that we had no power, we could attach to ourselves no blame. If we had been endeavouring to lift an immense weight, and, after our utmost exertion, had ascertained that we could not do it, we should be far from covering ourselves with reproaches, and exclaiming, 'Oh! guilty creature that I am!' We should rather resign ourselves to the result, however calamitous, without any feeling of self reproof. This, indeed,

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is precisely what some professors do with regard to experimental piety. 'I am lukewarm,' say they, 'and too worldly-minded, I know: but I cannot help it; I can do nothing of myself; I must wait till the Lord pleases to visit me.' But what sort of religious experience are we to call this? To us it appears to be one of the most fearful signs of religious declension and prevailing sin. At all events, Paul's experience was very different when he said, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And equally different be ours, and that of all our readers! Is it ever well with us, but when the evils of the heart are matter of deep affliction and severe self-reproach? But, if this feeling be just, it cannot be a case in which we are without power; for, in such a case, no just self-reproach could exist.

Should any reader be disposed to question whether the existence of an evil disposition merely, without the want of power, can constitute such total helplessness and impossibility as we feel, he may notice two points. In the first place, no other cause of our helplessness exists, or can be conceived to exist; and those who maintain it never do, and never can, explain themselves. In the next place, the influence exerted by adverse feeling is exactly proportioned to its strength. Only suppose a case, therefore, in which adverse feeling is of immense force, strong

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enough to lead a man to disregard all that might subdue it, and then the influence and result of it are as great and as certain as though his very power were destroyed. Exactly such is the state of our hearts towards God; and hence the feeling, so characteristic of christian experience, of helplessness combined with criminality. This combination cannot be accounted for, we may say it cannot exist, upon any principle but that which maintains both the depravity and the ability of man.

Upon no ground have we been more astonished at the resistance made to the admission of man's ability for his duty, than this on which we have now touched. We suppose it is as truly characteristic of divine teaching to learn that we are guilty, as to learn that we are helpless. Is any man taught of God, who has not felt himself justly chargeable with *sin*, with actual conduct and a state of heart which are *wrong*, and for which he *deserves* blame and condemnation? We suppose we may safely set this down as one of the elementary lessons in the school of Christ. But if a man believes this, we venture to affirm that he does *not* believe himself destitute of power to have been a different man; because, if he did, he could not feel himself justly blameable for sin. While we continue of sound mind, we can never give up this dictate of common sense, that we are not blameworthy for what we

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could not help; and, if we are really convinced that we could not help hating God and his authority, we never shall blame ourselves for doing so. How these two incompatible ideas get into the minds of some pious people, and dwell peaceably together, we cannot imagine, except by attributing to them a want of thought with which we are sorry any of them should be chargeable. If a person under first awakenings and deep convictions of sin were told that he could not help sinning, he would not believe it—at that time no man believes it: so far as the idea gains any practical influence upon the heart, it diminishes the sense of guilt, and, carried fairly out, would destroy it entirely. We have conversed with various persons upon this point, and once found a professor, not wanting in shrewdness, who went on to the inference that sin is no fault at all; and, however others may strive to evade the formality of coming to so strange a conclusion, little doubt can be entertained that the notion of human inability has exerted a wide and lamentable influence, in banishing from the experience of christians a sense of criminality. We think any close observer will allow, that among the professors of the present day there is much less of this feeling than there ought to be, and we unhesitatingly regard it as the offspring of this mischievous falsehood.

It has been conceived that a distinction be-

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tween will and power is drawn by the apostle, where he says, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. The good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do," Rom. vii. 18, 19. For the illustration of this passage the reader is requested to consider the following remarks.

In our account of the structure and operation of the mind, we have pointed out the difference between the habitual prevailing state of the heart, and the transient excitements to which it is subject; the latter are affections or emotions, the former is the disposition. The distinct operation of these upon the conduct may be worthy of a moment's observation. If the emotions excited should be always in harmony with the existing disposition, then there would be no possibility of an action in any degree contrary to the disposition itself; but, if there should arise emotions of a different tendency, then there might be, and, without watchful effort, there would be, an action not corresponding to the disposition. Human nature is so constituted that such emotions may arise. So it was with man in innocence, and so it is still. Hence results an especial and continual conflict in the renewed man; the disposition being holy, but the heart being also liable to the excitement of unholy emotions, under the immediate influence of which sin may be actually committed,

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and the accomplishment of the settled purpose of the mind be frustrated. This is the state of things which we conceive the apostle to be illustrating in the latter part of the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans. "I would do good," says he, "to will is present with me; I delight in the law of God after the inward man," ver. 18, 19, 22. These expressions represent his disposition, or the habitually prevailing state of his heart, which dictated a holy and devoted conduct, and gave this character to his life. He found, however, "another law in his members," an inclination to sin, "warring against the law of his mind," ver. 23; and the emotions produced in consequence of this were sometimes strong enough to prevent the fulfilment of his holy and devoted purposes; hence he says, "the good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not, that I do: to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not," ver. 18, 19; I am not watchful, and prompt, and vigorous enough, to maintain inviolate the great purpose of my soul. The whole passage appears to us to be remote from the question of power; it describes nothing more than a conflict of feelings.

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CHAP. XV.

Objections answered.

Our argument has not been pursued thus far, without meeting with some of the topics commonly adduced in the form of objections to the sentiment of man's ability. We trust satisfactory attention has been paid to these as they occurred; but there are some others of considerable prominence, which it would be improper to overlook.

1. It has been conceived that, if man's power to come to Christ be allowed, nothing will remain to prevent him from actually coming; and this would be contrary to the scriptures, which, at all events, declare that no man *will* come to Christ, except the Father draw him.

We believe, in the most unequivocal and decided manner, that no man ever did, or ever will come to Christ unless drawn by the Father; and, if the sentiment of man's ability were inconsistent with this belief, we could hold it no longer.

The objection, however, proceeds upon a principle which may be shown to be fallacious. The argument is this: 'Allow that a man can come to Christ, and then he will come; or, at least, you cannot be sure that he will not:' that is to say, all that a man can do he will do; or, at least,

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thing that he can do which you can be
l not do. This is manifestly false. Of
things which a man can do, he may do
some, and leave others undone; nay, he infallibly will do so; and what he will do, and what he will leave undone, may be infallibly known by any being who can search his heart. Take any action that you please out of those which a man can perform, it does not follow that he will perform it: nay, we *may* be infallibly assured that he never will perform it.

The fact is, that, in order to the performance of any action, two conditions are essentially necessary; the one is the possession of power, or the means of performing it, and the other is an inclination to do so. If it be to walk into the street, or to rise from my chair—I shall never do this if I have not power to do it; but neither shall I do it, although I have power, unless I have inclination. Power is not of itself active; it is merely the means of acting, and it sleeps till inclination arouses it. A disinclination to rise from my chair will as certainly prevent my doing so as if I wanted power, since it nullifies one of the conditions essential to the action; so that, if by any means you can ascertain how long my disinclination to do so will last, you may predict with an infallible certainty that so long I shall not rise from my chair.

This familiar illustration we have taken for the purpose of setting the principle in a clear

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light; but the principle itself will be found to extend to all our actions, the greatest and most important not excepted. Our coming to Christ depends upon two conditions: first, our power to come; secondly, our inclination to come. We certainly shall not come if we have not power; neither if we have power shall we come if we have not inclination. If we have power therefore, still it may be true that we shall never come to Christ, because we may never have an inclination to do so.

The whole question, therefore, whether a man who has power to come to Christ ever will come, resolves itself into this, What is the state of his inclination? Is he inclined to come? Or is he indifferent, yet willing to consider why he should come? Or is he disinclined to come, but only to such a degree, that he still is ready to listen and reflect? Or is his disinclination so strong as to become the habitual and prevailing state of his heart, and to induce a determined disregard of all that might influence him? If the state of a man's mind be such as is described in the earlier of these questions, then we may perchance see the wonder of one coming to Christ of himself; but if it be truly represented by the last of them, it is plain that he never will come of himself, his disinclination leading to the abandonment of the only method by which he might be brought to such a result.

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We have only to ask, then, whether the state of a man's mind can be known in this respect; and, if so, what it is. We have all of us means of estimating the inclinations of others and our own to some extent, but not so far as to speak certainly of what will or will not be done, either by others or ourselves. There is one being, however, though only one, to whom all hearts are open; and to him it is fully known whether any man will of himself come to Christ. He has given us the advantage of his knowledge in his holy word, which teaches us that no man ever will so come. We might quote much to this effect; but the sum is, that God, who knows the end from the beginning, has forewarned us that the evil disposition of a sinner will, in every case, induce him to reject the Saviour.

What more does the objector want, to satisfy him of this melancholy truth, and to relieve him of his fears that some poor sinner may come to Christ of himself? Why should he deem it necessary to add to this impediment another, consisting in the want of power? One would be ready to imagine that he does not believe the divine testimony, that he cannot think any man will be so mad, or so wicked, as to keep aloof from Christ if he has power to come to him, and that he finds a difficulty in entertaining so dreadful an opinion of another, or of himself. There is probably more of this scepticism at the bottom

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of the efforts made to maintain the inability of man than its advocates are aware of. But let them open their eyes to it; and, if this be their real feeling, let them manfully avow it. If they will fairly place themselves among the advocates of human goodness, if they will maintain that there are such remnants of right feeling in a corrupt heart, that a sinner really would of himself turn to Christ if a want of power were not superadded to prevent him, then we shall know where they are, and in what company to find them. We do not believe, however, that they will do this; but really we have all of us need to acquire more just and humbling views of the "nest of serpents" which sin has generated in every man's bosom.

2. Akin to this objection is another, namely, that if man is allowed to possess power to be what he ought to be, there is no ground for maintaining the necessity of the Spirit.

We should feel the force of this objection, if power were the only condition necessary to the performance of an action; but, if there be any other condition necessary also, the necessity of the Spirit's influence may surely be maintained in reference to that, although not in reference to power. It has already been shown that a second condition is necessary to the performance of every action, namely, inclination; and whether the influence of the Spirit is or is not necessary to produce such an inclination must depend upon the

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state of the mind itself. If, as we have maintained, the state of man's heart be such that an inclination to turn to Christ will never arise in it, then the necessity of the Spirit's influence may be intelligibly and justly affirmed. Those who do not coincide in this conclusion must be supposed to hold, either that inclination is not necessary to action, or that the inclination of man is not hopelessly averse from God; and they are welcome to either alternative.

Whether that kind of necessity for the influence of the Holy Spirit which arises from the disinclination of the sinner be that which the scriptures exhibit, is a question which has elsewhere been considered. We will here only repeat our conviction that this is the fact. They do not represent any impediment as obstructing a sinner's conversion but his unwillingness; they cannot, therefore, recognize any other cause as originating the necessity of the Spirit's work.

3. A third objection to the doctrine of human ability has been raised, on the ground that it makes no proper allowance for the effect of the fall. No doubt, it is said, man in innocence had power to love God; but, if the fall did not deprive him of this power, what has he suffered by it? Is he not in as good a condition as before?

Nothing can be more certain than that a most serious and melancholy injury was inflicted upon man by the sin and fall of our first parents; and

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it would be a valid objection against any sentiment that it made no proper allowance for it. But, at the same time, it is manifest that the fall did not annihilate man, nor did it destroy *all* his powers, or means of action and enjoyment. Still he retains his senses; still he is an intelligent and rational creature. It is plainly necessary, therefore, to ascertain correctly the nature and extent of the injury thus arising; it is by no means allowable to conclude, that, because a great mischief has been suffered, that mischief necessarily comprehends the loss of power to do well.

What, then, was the nature of the injury resulting to man from the fall?

It may have been of one of two kinds, according to the twofold aspect in which man himself is to be regarded. Man may be considered, first, as a creature possessing certain faculties, or means of action; secondly, as a moral agent, possessing a disposition to employ those faculties in certain methods, good or evil. Now the fall may have affected man in regard to his disposition, or in regard to his faculties.

The objection alleges that the injury has fallen upon his faculties; to which we demur, for the following reasons.

(1.) The faculties of man are not injured in fact. Let it only be recollected what they are —those of perceiving, of feeling, of determining, of attending, of judging concerning good and

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evil; these are the faculties of man as a moral agent, those which capacitate him to do good or evil. Which of these has he lost? Manifestly none of them. If any reader doubts whether these are all the faculties necessary to moral action, we must refer him to page 39, where this subject is fully treated. We maintain them to be so; and, if they are, the fall has neither destroyed nor impaired any one of the faculties of man.

We know very well that these faculties do not, since the fall, act as they did before; but this proves no change in themselves. Their action is altogether affected by the disposition of their possessor; and to an evil disposition their actual indolence or mis-employment is to be referred. If it should be said that disposition must then be necessary to power, we must again refer to first principles, page 53, in establishing which it has been shown that disposition is *not* necessary to power, but is totally and essentially distinct from it.

(2.) If the power of man had been injured, it would have reduced him in the scale of creatures, which is nowhere alleged to be the case.

The means of action possessed by various creatures constitute the scale on which are measured the differences by which one is distinguished from another. Creatures possessing means of action in the smallest degree are the lowest in the scale, and every one rises in proportion as these become

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more ample. It is the possession of means of action superior to those of any other creature on earth, that places man, as a creature, at the head of them all; and he, like the rest, must rise or sink in the scale of creation, just as these may be diminished or increased. To say, therefore, that man has less power than he once had, is to say that his rank as a creature is lowered, that his place in creation is altered, and that he is somewhat nearer than he once was to the brutes that perish. But do the scriptures ever intimate this? Most certainly not. They declare him to have fallen, not as a creature, but as a holy creature; not in nature, but in character; not in power, but in disposition. The place which he has lost is not in the scale of creation, but in that of righteousness; his fall is not from human to brute, but from divine to diabolical.

(3.) The effect of the fall upon man has been to render him sinful, which a want of power is not.

All the epithets applied to man as fallen are expressive of God's disapprobation. He is said to be corrupt, abominable, &c.; so that, whatever the effect of the fall may have been, the sinfulness of it is unquestionable. Want of power, however, cannot have the character of sin. Power is means of action; to possess which is no virtue, to be destitute of which is no crime. They may be attained in some cases by methods which were vir-

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tuous, and in others they may be lost by methods which were criminal: but even in such cases the virtue or the fault characterizes, not the state resulting, but only the steps leading to it. I am right or wrong only as I use the power I have. The possession of less power than I had, or than my parents had, may be a calamity to me, but it cannot be a sin; but the effect of the fall has been to render me sinful; it cannot, therefore, be the loss of power which it has entailed upon me.

(4.) It may be added, that diversities of power require a corresponding diversity of treatment; whereas God treats man before the fall and after it precisely on the same principles.

That beings who possess different means of action ought not to be treated alike, but with a corresponding difference, seems an obvious dictate of reason and justice. The methods by which you endeavour to induce action should clearly be adapted to the faculties on which you work; and, if there were any difference in power between man before the fall and man after it, there should have been an equal difference in the methods of the divine conduct. Is there any such difference? Manifestly not. The circumstances are different, the motives presented are different; but the principle of treatment is identical. Innocent man was dealt with in a way of rational motive and persuasion, and with fallen man it is the same. To Adam God said, in substance, Obey my will

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for certain reasons; and he says the same to us. He left Adam to the result of his own thoughts, and he leaves us to the result of ours. The duties enjoined upon us respectively differ, and the reasons assigned for them, but the method of treatment does not differ at all. It is persuasion; it is the presentation of motive; it is an appeal to the understanding and the heart. Would there have been an identity of treatment if there were a diversity of power?

We need not be reminded that there is a difference in his treatment of fallen man, in relation to the promise of his Spirit. We have already shown our reasons for believing that the gift of the Spirit is not universal, nor in any way necessary to the just responsibility of man. God holds those accountable for their conduct to whom he does not give the Spirit; with these, therefore, his method of treatment is precisely the same as that which he adopted with innocent man; and we draw the inference that their power is the same.

(5.) We may observe, finally, that a loss of power is nowhere in scripture ascribed to the fall. Every expression seemingly indicative of a want of power has, upon a just interpretation, as we have elsewhere shown at large, a different meaning.

We shall now, perhaps, be asked, what effect did the fall produce? Our answer is, a change

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in the disposition of man. Before it he was a friend to God, after it he was an enemy; before it his disposition was holy and heavenly, afterwards it was earthly and corrupt.

That the fall did produce this effect both scripture and observation yield abundant proof, and it probably will not be disputed by our brethren in this argument. The question rather is, whether a due and sufficient effect is thus assigned to it. We maintain the affirmative—

1st. By the agreement of the sentiment with matter of fact: it being an obvious fact, that the powers of man, as a rational and moral agent, are not destroyed, while his disposition is become corrupt.

2dly. By the impossibility, as already shown, of referring the effect of the fall to the power of man. And, if it did not touch his power, it could alight on nothing else but his disposition; the only views in which man can be regarded being these two—either as a creature possessing power, or as a moral agent possessing disposition.

3dly. By the adequacy of the sentiment to account for all the circumstances of the case.

[1.] Take the fact, for example, that men are universally wicked, without an exception in any age or in any clime; a wicked disposition of great intensity is quite adequate to explain it. Or take this, that, although often and loudly called, no man repents, or of himself ever will repent; and

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such an evil disposition will account for it with equal ease. Nor is there any case or aspect of human guilt which may not be resolved on this supposition, quite as satisfactorily as by imagining a want of power. Different as power and disposition are in themselves, they agree in this, that they are alike necessary to action; and let either be wanting, the action is with equal certainty prevented.

[2.] Look again at the fact, that God is angry with man in his present state, and calls it sin, which, upon the supposition of its being a want of power, is quite unintelligible: considering it as the indulgence of an evil disposition, the matter is perfectly plain. We have shown that disposition is a voluntary thing, and in all cases just matter of praise or blame; if, therefore, a wrong state of feeling is that which has resulted from the fall, the displeasure of God may be expressed against it with the strictest justice.

[3.] Reflect on the very strong terms in which the wickedness of human nature is described, the utter extinction of good in the heart, and the overwhelming force of evil: it needs only an evil disposition of sufficient strength to realize it all. There is no goodness in power; and therefore loss of power cannot be necessary to loss of goodness. Goodness lies wholly and exclusively in disposition; so that, if the disposition is become wholly evil, every spark of goodness has fled.

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[4.] Or consider, finally, the dispensation of God towards man, how, although man has fallen, he still reasons, and pleads, and endeavours to persuade; all which, upon the supposition of the want of power, cannot be deemed less than absurd; but, if an evil disposition be that which distinguishes fallen from innocent man, everything is plain. While the rational powers of man remain, persuasion is an appropriate and sufficient means of dealing with him; whether it be successful or not, it has in itself no absurdity, no unsuitableness. It is as fit for us as it was for Adam, and lays a foundation of unquestionable justice for responsibility proportionate to the motives employed.

It appears to us fully sufficient, therefore, to maintain that the effect of the fall was to change the disposition of man, and not to destroy his power. The rectitude of his disposition we hold to be totally destroyed; his power as a moral agent to be altogether unimpaired.

4. It has sometimes been asked, how is the assertion that man has power to do good reconcilable with the doctrine of his total depravity?

The doctrine of the total depravity of man we unequivocally maintain; and in order to see how it is reconcilable with his ability to do well, it is only needful to observe wherein the true nature of depravity consists. We suppose we may take it for granted that depravity is something evil or

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blameworthy. Now, we have elsewhere stated (page 62) that good and evil in man have their existence only in the heart, or in the state of the feelings. If a man's feelings be right everything will be right, because the feelings regulate everything; and if anything in his conduct be wrong, it must, on the same principle, spring from something wrong in his feelings. There is neither good nor evil in any part of man but his heart, of the state of which all his actions are but the expression; and, if this be the case, depravity is a word which can have reference to the state of the heart alone, inasmuch as it refers to something which is evil. It has no reference, therefore, to the power of man in any view of it, but solely to his disposition; and, whatever may be asserted respecting the depravity of man, his power is left wholly out of the question. He may be, and we maintain that he is, totally depraved; and yet, as we also maintain, his power may be altogether perfect and entire. What we mean by saying that a man is totally depraved, is, that he has a thoroughly wrong disposition; which, it is plain, may consist with the most ample and excellent powers. If depravity means more than this, the case of course will be altered; but we believe we have here used the word in its correct and scriptural signification.

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CHAP. XVI.

Further objections answered.

5. It has been considered as a weighty objection to the sentiment of man's ability, that nothing is gained by it. The result, it is said, is the same. No more persons are saved; and men, after all, will not repent.

We cannot sufficiently wonder at this objection. As though it were to be considered, in the investigation of a sentiment, whether anything would be gained by it! We are to suppose, then, that an opinion which rests upon slight evidence, or upon none at all, should be readily received if it seemed likely to yield some advantage; while another, although supported by the strongest evidence, if it have not such a recommendation, is to be rejected. We have been used to think the great question to be, what is truth; and that it is imperative in all cases to do homage to the majesty of truth, by submitting to her authority. Whether, in the exhibition we may think proper to give of truth, we shall give to any topic a more or less prominent place, may perhaps depend upon our view of its profitableness; but surely nothing that is true can rightly be rejected, or denied. To judge everything

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untrue which is of no apparent benefit, would be to supersede the use of evidence entirely; and the extensive application of such a rule would assign to the class of falsehoods a large portion of hitherto acknowledged truths. We deem it not too much, therefore, to insist upon an examination of the question according to its evidence, irrespectively of its issues. We ask, is it true; and shall consider every man who passes from the question by saying what do you gain by it, as unable or unwilling to meet the proof.

It can scarcely be less than presumptuous, however, to assume that a sentiment possesses no useful tendency because it is not apparent to us. We may be too blind, or too much prejudiced, to observe or to appreciate it. It is much more reasonable to conclude, that, if it be true, it must be useful, on the general principle that whatever is true is so (if it have any influence at all); and this might be maintained emphatically with respect to the truth of God. If the sentiment in question be true, it is a part of the truth of God; a truth which he has revealed, and one which stands connected with his methods of administration, and the eternal interests of mankind. Can any such truth be unimportant, or otherwise than of a beneficial tendency? And, if we do not see its advantage, should not this lead us rather to suspect our own ignorance, than to impute folly to our Maker?

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In fact, the objection itself proceeds upon a strangely contracted view of the divine dispensations. 'The result is the same,' says the objector, 'upon your scheme as on ours.' Undoubtedly. Did any body ever think of producing a change in results? Will not the result be the same on every scheme of religious opinion? Do the various and conflicting thoughts of men affect the fulfilment of the designs of God? If it were to make us indifferent to one form of religious belief that the result would not be altered by it, this should equally make us indifferent to all its forms; for by not one of them, false or true, will results be changed. Though truth were banished from the world, God would work his sovereign pleasure. He that sets light by one opinion because no more souls will be saved by it, may for the same reason set light by every other: let him hold which he will, just the same number of sinners will be redeemed.

The importance of religious opinions lies, not only in their ultimate effect, but in their present bearing. They are valuable in proportion as they are adapted to produce a right state of mind. The test, therefore, to which the sentiment in question is justly liable, is this: Does it represent the ways of God in a light more beneficially influential than the opposite opinion? If it does, something *is* gained by it; everything,

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indeed, which can be gained by one sentiment in comparison with another.

That the assertion of man's ability for right action does lead to representations of God which are eminently honourable to him, needs no proof. It throws a flood of light on the justice of his commands, and the reasonableness of his expectations. It establishes beyond controversy the criminality of man, and sheds a glorious lustre on the goodness, forbearance, and redeeming love of the Almighty. It shows that all his ways are both equitable and kind, and that the whole blame of his sin and ruin lies with the transgressor himself. Are these matters of no importance? What friend of God is he, who does not rejoice in all the additional light which can be thrown upon his ways? Or are they unimportant in relation to man? Is it nothing to gain an answer to some of the many cavils by which sinners repel or evade the call to repentance? Is it nothing to fix upon their consciences a conviction of guilt, and to leave them manifestly without excuse?

But, after all, if you do this, says the objector, none of them will any more repent till the Spirit change their hearts. True, undoubtedly: but, if you are silent on this ground, let every other topic of address be abandoned also. Why do you preach at all? No one will be converted by it, unless grace change the heart. But, if we at

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all appeal to sinners in a way adapted to affect them, in expectation of God's blessing, every topic adapted to such an end should be adduced, and the greatest value attached to those modes of address which are best adapted to the design. On these the greater blessing may be expected.

It seems to have been thought by some persons, that the adaptation of the gospel to the conversion of sinners is arbitrary, a mere matter of divine appointment; that there is no fitness in the gospel itself to accomplish the end, but that it does so only because God has been pleased to determine that it should; and that, if he had pleased, he might as well have ordained that conversion should have resulted from the teaching of geography, or from the lowing of oxen. Such an idea is fully implied, in the manner in which certain ministers justify the preaching of the gospel to those who have no power to repent; and, on this ground, of course, they feel little inducement to adopt a mode of address because of its adaptation to convince or impress the mind. Nothing can be more derogatory to divine wisdom, or more inconsistent with obvious fact, than this idea. When the means which God has appointed for conversion are examined, they appear directly fitted to the design. Intended to operate upon an intelligent and rational creature whose feelings are to be reached through his understanding, every word of scripture ap-

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peals to the understanding; and the whole exhibits a collection of motives, adapted to the nature of man with infinite skill, and possessing an unmeasurable and almost overwhelming power. Is it imaginable that an apparatus like this should have been employed by accident? Besides, the pursuit of an end by suitable means is one of the first dictates of wisdom. It is that which God has made every creature to do; and, in their excellencies, his creatures are the images of himself. He has so constituted us as even to deride the attempt to accomplish an object by means known to be unsuitable. And is it conceivable that, having put this impress on the whole creation, and having a boundless store of means at his command, he should, in the most glorious of all his works, and in one which he summons all intelligent beings to behold, violate his own law, and exhibit himself in a light which it would be impossible to admire, and almost impossible not to deride?

The manner in which the influences of the blessed Spirit are imparted fully accords with the view we are taking. Much of sovereignty, doubtless, may be observed in it; but, at the same time, much of wisdom. The kind of preaching which has been made most useful, has been that which was best adapted to be useful; that, namely, which has been most scriptural in sentiment, most solemn in manner, most earnest and affec-

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tionate in spirit. We may hence conclude that God chooses to work by adapted means; and that, where the means are best adapted, he will give the largest success.

If this be the case, we gain much by every approach to accuracy of sentiment. It is not only that our representations are more fitted to be useful, they are also more secure of a blessing. We are honouring God by speaking what he has bidden us, and we may hope to be honoured by him in the reception of our message. In this respect there is a high bounty attached to the rectification of our mistakes, since every improvement in handling the word of truth renders it more probable that God may employ us for good.

6. The principle we have maintained has been conceived to be inconsistent with the important doctrine of regeneration. In noticing this objection, I must beg to understand distinctly what view of regeneration the objector entertains; or rather, in default of a living objector to explain to me his views, I must enter with some explicitness into my own.

I observe, then, that the sacred writers use the term regeneration and its cognates, born again, begotten of God, &c., with much latitude. In some cases they appear to mean by it the introduction of persons to a new state of happiness and privilege; as in 1 Peter i. 3—"Who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the

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resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Sometimes they use it to denote a practical religious change; as in James i. 18—"Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth." A change wrought by the influence of the gospel can be no other than what is usually known by the name of conversion. Of the same practical change it appears to me that our Lord was speaking in his discourse with Nicodemus, John iii., of which we shall speak more particularly presently. In other cases the phrase in question is employed to denote that direct exercise of divine power upon the mind of man, by which a turn is effectually given to the current of its action, and from which a series of holy exercises immediately originates. Such is understood to be the meaning of it in John i. 12: "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God, even to as many as believed in his name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." I have drawn the attention of the reader to the various senses in which the word regeneration and its kindred terms are used in the New Testament, in order to show that it is neither just nor safe to reason as though all the passages which speak of regeneration referred to the same thing, or more particularly to that which is called regeneration in systematic theology.

Taking for the present the term regenera-

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tion in the last sense which I have quoted, as denoting a direct action of God on the soul of man, by which the current of its action is immediately and effectually turned—and this with me is its theological import—I can perceive that an objection may be raised on two grounds.

In the first place, it may be said that regeneration is the commencement of spiritual life; and that, as the existence of spiritual life must precede the performance of spiritual actions, an unregenerate person cannot have power to perform them.

This is a very instructive instance of the facility with which mistakes may be committed, in the use of the metaphorical language with which the scriptures abound. It will scarcely be doubted, we suppose, that the term regeneration, as applied to the operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul of man, is a metaphor. By all means let us have its true and full import, but no more. In order to ascertain this, regard should be had to the series of metaphorical representations of which it forms a part. While in sin men are said to be dead; under the influence of the Spirit of God they are said to be alive; and that exercise of his power by which this change from metaphorical death to metaphorical life is produced, is appropriately called regeneration. But, dropping the metaphors, what is the actual matter which they are employed to illustrate? It is the state of a sinner's mind, and nothing more.

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It is the voluntary direction of a man's faculties in a course of sin which constitutes his metaphorical death; a voluntary direction of the same faculties in a course of holiness constitutes his metaphorical life; and the act of divine power which is called regeneration has precisely the effect of causing him to commence it. There being nothing in question, therefore, but a man's voluntary action, and regeneration being nothing but the origination of a new mode of voluntary action, we are entitled to reject the terms in which the objection is couched as a misuse of analogical language. With relation to life, literally understood, there can be no doubt that a body which has not life cannot perform living actions; but this does not hold good of life metaphorically spoken of. In this case the terms death and life are applied to a living being, not to denote either the presence or absence of a capacity to act, but solely the direction in which he chooses to act; so that it is a clear abuse of analogical language to say that an unregenerate man cannot act in a holy manner—the only thing to be said is that he will not. It is plain that he can before he is regenerated; or else it would be impossible that he should begin to do so on a mere change of his state of mind.

We have said that regeneration relates exclusively to the state of a sinner's mind; we may now add, that it relates to the state of his mind

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in a special aspect. Let us here attend a little to a distinction which may be drawn between the state of the mind in action, and the state of the mind at rest; a distinction clearly founded in fact, and of important practical bearing.

It is manifest that there must be a period when, in reference to any given subject, no actual feeling exists, as in cases of previous ignorance; yet that, while no feeling actually exists, there may be a predisposition to some specific state of feeling in regard to it. For example, if I have unconsciously inflicted an injury, while I am ignorant of it I have no feeling concerning it; when I come to the knowledge of it, I may feel more or less sorry, or perhaps not sorry at all; but what determines the nature and degree of these feelings? Obviously, in the first instance the state of mind previously existing; as the enmity or love I may have borne towards the particular person injured, or the tenderness I may have cherished respecting the welfare of others in general. This antecedent state of the heart powerfully predisposes to specific courses of feeling and action, and is of great importance as a constituent element of character. It is nearly allied to constitutional impulses, and other predisposing causes existing in mankind at birth; with this broad distinction, however, that these, not being voluntary, subject us to no blame. This is exemplified in infants, in whom a cause

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predisposing to sinful action must be held to exist, since those who live invariably do evil; but to whom, while yet incapable of any moral action, it seems impossible to ascribe sin. When we begin to exercise our affections on moral objects, we soon, by a series of actual preferences, form a habit of preferring one class to another, and so cherish an abiding or quiescent state of mind, which is our own produce, and is either good or evil according to its tendency. In point of fact, by repeated exercises of aversion from God, we quickly form a habit of aversion; and this habit lies permanently in our bosom—dormant when no object is presented to awaken feelings of the class to which it belongs, but always ready, and always availing, to give to every feeling of this class its own colour. In a word, whenever a person who is averse to God thinks of God, he will think of him with aversion.

Now it is this quiescent state of the heart to which we conceive the terms death, life, and regeneration, more specifically refer. They do not denote actions of any kind, but states out of which peculiar and appropriate actions arise. The alienation of a man's heart from God is called death; a right feeling towards him is called life; and the production of such a feeling is the precise act of the Spirit which is called regeneration, or giving life to the dead. Its connexion with conversion is easily illustrated.

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While unconverted, his estrangement induces a man to disregard everything which tends to make him uneasy in a sinful life, and hence his fearful and criminal perseverance in it; but, when this is removed, and a right feeling towards God is imparted, then he begins to attend to the truths hitherto neglected, and in proportion as he attends to them they operate on him, and produce all the varied phenomena of conversion to God. May we be allowed to add our conviction, that an observation of the distinction upon which we have here dwelt would facilitate, if it would not even close, the long-perplexed inquiry respecting the identity and priority of regeneration and conversion?

Whether this idea of regeneration may satisfy our companions in this argument we know not, nor can we here enter into a discussion of it; it is, we hope, intelligible to our readers, and it is in our own view scriptural and satisfactory. It entirely removes the imaginary difficulty before us. For, if regeneration have respect exclusively to the state of mind in man, it can have no relation whatever to his power, which, as we have seen, is altogether distinct from his state of mind, and unaffected by it; so that, whether regenerate or unregenerate, he is the same in power, though he differs widely in moral habit.

We now take up the second objection to which we have referred. We are told that regenera-

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tion is a divine change; that it is the act of God exclusively; and that, since this is essential to salvation, something is necessary which a sinner cannot do for himself.

There is much truth in this allegation, but it is mixed with untruths, from which we must endeavour to separate it. Undoubtedly, regeneration, in the sense in which we have been speaking of it, is wholly and exclusively the act of God. As the subject of it, the sinner is wholly passive, and he has no share whatever in its effectuation. The very idea of his participating in it is not only mistaken, but preposterous. But I go on to observe, that it is not regeneration in this sense which is declared to be necessary to salvation. When the scripture speaks of regeneration as necessary to salvation, it uses the term to express a practical change in human character, and not the act of divine power which is sometimes denoted by the same term. To establish this view, nothing more is necessary than to refer to the discourse of our Lord with Nicodemus, in which he so emphatically asserts the necessity of the new birth to salvation: "Except a man be born again," or rather, be begotten of God, "he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." This phrase—begotten of God—is the counterpart of that which is subsequently used, "born [begotten] of the Spirit." Now it might seem that the phrase, begotten of God,

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could hardly have been used in this case, without intending to intimate, that the change denoted by it is of divine origin. A considerate examination of it, however, may lead to a different opinion. There is high critical authority for saying, that the phrase, begotten of God, denotes simply the formation of a moral likeness to God, or the renewing of our minds in the image of his holiness; and that it does not convey any idea concerning the power by which, or the method in which, this conformity to God may be wrought. I have no doubt that our Lord is speaking exclusively of this practical renovation in his address to Nicodemus, and that he has no reference whatever, as has been commonly supposed, to the divine origin of the change. In addition to the import of the term, as settled by critical authority, I am guided in this conclusion by two other considerations.

In the first place, I observe the nature of the ground on which Christ establishes, for the conviction of his disciple, the necessity he had asserted. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Or, to express the meaning in plainer words, "Those who are begotten of man are human, and those who are begotten of the Spirit [or of God] are spiritual [or divine]. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again [begotten of God]." The phrases

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begotten of man and begotten of God I take to indicate a moral conformity to the image respectively of corrupt man and a holy God; and the sentiment conveyed by our Lord appears to me to be this:—'Those who resemble corrupt men are fit only for the society of men; and those only are fit for fellowship with God who possess a similarity to God. Marvel not, therefore, that I said, ye must bear the likeness of God.' If this explanation of the words should seem to any reader forced or unnatural, I have only to request him to use a vigorous effort to interpret the whole passage, and to trace out the entire line of thought in the mind of the divine instructor. It is but few persons who attempt to acquire a consistent view of this important passage throughout; yet it is only in such a view that its separate clauses can be justly understood. An interpretation of a single sentence, in the mouth of a person who admits that he does not understand the connexion, is not worth a moment's consideration. The verse, as I have explained it, presents to the startled mind of Nicodemus an obvious and convincing reason why a practical change was necessary; but it becomes apparent, at the same time, that it was only of a practical change that his instructor was speaking.

In the second place, I observe the character of the entire discourse, of which our Lord's declaration concerning the new birth forms only a part.

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After treating this subject, he immediately passes on, in the 14th verse, to a closely associated topic: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The reader will recollect the evangelical declarations which then succeed, and the conclusion to which our Lord brings the whole—"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," ver. 19. Now it is plain that this discourse is *one*, and that the latter part of it is properly to be taken in connexion with the former. I beg, then, the candid reader to say, whether the Lord Jesus does not here present the gospel as a means of removing that carnality of mind which unfits us for fellowship with God, and of producing that conformity to him which is indispensable to such a privilege. The Son of Man is lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; and the "eternal life" which is to be obtained by believing in him can be no other than "entering into the kingdom of heaven"—the same privilege under another name. If these things be so—and I see not how they can be denied—it follows that our Lord, after having shown Nicodemus that a change of character was necessary, shows him also how it may be produced, namely, by believing in the Son of

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God; he teaches him that it will be produced by faith, and that, if it be not effected, the fault lies with men themselves, who, although "light is come into the world, love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Consequently, our Lord has not been speaking of the necessity of being begotten of God, with reference to any act of God on the soul, but with reference only to that practical conformity to God, which, as the scripture everywhere teaches, results from faith in his Son. And I come thus to the point I have to establish, namely, that regeneration, in the sense in which it is necessary to salvation, is not an act of God, in relation to which man can do nothing; but it is a change in man, which he can produce in himself, by exercising that faith which purifies the heart.

Some persons may now, perhaps, be ready to ask me, with unfeigned astonishment, whether I really mean to say that men can be regenerated without the influence of the Holy Spirit, and, above all, that men can regenerate themselves. To dispose first of the latter question, I have only to make the very reasonable request that we may have to do with things, and may not be misled by names. The word regeneration is used for two things, and, before we say anything about it, we must know in what sense it is employed. If the inquirer means by regeneration the act of

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God on the soul of man, I do not think that man can regenerate himself. If he means by regenerating the production of a practical conformity to God, I do think that man can regenerate himself; in other words, that faith in Christ will purify his heart.

The other question—whether men can be regenerated without the influence of the Holy Spirit—is to be answered on a different principle. In this I conceive the inquirer asking me, whether regeneration in the practical sense can be separated from regeneration in the technical sense; or, whether the renewing act of God on the soul is not necessary to the actual renovation of a sinner's mind. Let me be permitted here to remind him, that we have now before us in another form the old question, whether the influence of the Spirit of God is not necessary to the conversion of a sinner; for regeneration in the practical sense differs not materially from conversion, and regeneration in the technical sense is only another name for the influence of the Spirit of God. As the questions are one, so is the answer. The influence of the Spirit *is* necessary; but, as it is necessary in conversion only because a sinner will not turn to God without it, so it is necessary in regeneration only because a sinner will not conform himself to God without it. If a sinner would but properly use his own faculties, the influence of

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the Spirit might be dispensed with as well in the latter case as in the former.

I must now observe, that the question whether the influence of the Spirit is necessary to the practical regeneration of man, is widely different from this—whether such regeneration is necessary to to his salvation. That conformity to God should be wrought in the heart of man *is* necessary to his salvation; but it is of no importance to his salvation how this conformity may be effected. To illustrate my meaning, I will suppose, for argument's sake, that there is a man whose heart has by himself been conformed to God; and I affirm, that he would not be refused the privilege connected with conformity to God, because the change had not been produced by the Spirit of God. That which is necessary to salvation is the change, not its divine origin. Be it wrought how it may, its connected privilege is the same.

To return to the point from which we set out, and to express the conclusion to which I trust we have fairly come—since it is not the divine origin of regeneration which is necessary to salvation, but only the production of that change itself, and since this will certainly result from the exercise of faith in Christ, we conclude that there is required to the salvation of a sinner nothing which it is beyond his ability to perform.

Before dismissing this objection, we may observe that it rests upon the extreme ground of

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denying the obligation of unregenerate men altogether. If carried out, it leads to an abandonment of all the commands and exhortations which God has addressed to men as such, that is, to men unregenerate. This alone might induce any reasonable man to suspect it, and will instantly satisfy many of its unsoundness.

7. I have been met by the observation, that the use of means depends for its success upon God's blessing, or, which in this case is conceived to be the same thing, upon the Spirit's influence; and from hence it is inferred, that, however we may without the Spirit use the means, we cannot without him attain the end.

I reply to this, by objecting to the assumption that the divine energy which connects the means of moral action with their appropriate end is the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is doubtless true, that, as the wisdom of God has adapted all means to their ends, so his power in all cases renders them effectual. It is equally by his energy that a seed germinates in the earth, that gunpowder is inflamed by a spark, and that perception awakens emotion. But this is a natural energy, and not the influence of the Holy Spirit; nor do I know why that should be called so, which renders reflection upon religious topics effectual to the conversion of a sinner. For what reason should the energy which connects a meditation on God's glory with a feeling of

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humility, or a meditation on Christ's sufferings with a feeling of love, any more be ascribed to to the Holy Spirit, than that which connects the view of a volcano with emotions of sublimity? The operation in both cases accords with the nature and constitution of the mind, and requires nothing more for its accomplishment than the ordinary connexion between means and ends.

The influence of the Holy Spirit is, in all its aspects, a matter of grace through Christ Jesus, and a part of the covenant work of redemption; but the general connexion between means and ends, although truly divine, is not a part of the the work of redemption, nor a fruit of the death of Christ, nor a matter of mercy at all. It is, on the contrary, a part of the original constitution of nature, a matter of primary wisdom and equity, needful to lay a foundation for rational conduct among mankind, as well as for the moral government of God.

I cannot hesitate, therefore, to express my conviction, that (with a single exception, to be explained presently) the influence which connects moral and religious means with their ends is not that of the Holy Spirit; but that this connexion, like that of natural means with their respective ends, is established by the divine energy comprehended in the original constitution of things. Or let it only be supposed that it is not so—let it be supposed that, while, in every other department of

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human action, the energetic connexion between means and ends exists as a fixed and constant element in the structure of the universe, in the department of duty (by far the most important of all) there is no such connexion; but that here, if the use of means produces any result, it is owing to a special influence, which could not have been bestowed at all if it had not been for the death of Christ, and which perhaps may not be bestowed although Christ has died: to say nothing of the hardship of duty required on such an hypothesis, it is obvious that, in this case, sin must have produced a physical derangement in the creation, and that the object of the Spirit's work in redemption must be to remedy this physical defect. Whether any of my readers may feel complacency in such a conclusion, I know not; but it has generally been held, I believe, that the effects which it is the office of the blessed Spirit to produce are of a moral, and not of a physical kind.

Should I be asked, for what, then, it is that we need the influence of the Holy Spirit, if it is not to render the means we use with ourselves effectual to our good, I answer, it is to lead us to the use of those means. It is this, properly understood, to which the carnal heart is prevailingly and stubbornly averse; and it is to conquer this aversion that a gracious divine interposition is required. Such I believe to be the doctrine of

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holy writ; and I have no doubt but it agrees with universal experience. For my own part, I am fully convinced that sacred meditation operates to the production of holy feeling in me, by virtue of the constitution of my mind, and of the the divine energy which essentially sustains it. That for which I am indebted—and infinitely indebted—to the Holy Spirit is, that he leads this wandering and wayward heart to contemplation, and draws me towards that adorable Saviour, from whom, were it not for these gracious impulses, I should for ever stray. There are no influences so undeserved, so richly and so touchingly merciful, as these.

Of course, I am perfectly aware that the work of the Holy Spirit is not confined to those impulses, by which he leads us to the use of the means appropriate to our spiritual good. Far be it from me, either to deny or to depreciate those sacred and blessed influences, by which the heart of the christian is so often refreshed, his graces enlivened, and his holy consolations enlarged, with a merciful, wise, and adorable sovereignty. I trust I am not intruding on this hallowed field, when I affirm that the divine energy which maintains the universal connexion between means and ends is natural rather than gracious, and rather pertains to the original constitution of things than to the work of redeeming love.

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The only exception to the principle now laid down, is to be found in the use of means for the conversion, not of ourselves, but of others. In this case I readily admit that, if the effect is produced, it is through the gracious influence of the Spirit. But the nature of the case immediately shows the ground of the exception. Here are means used towards a voluntary agent; towards a being, therefore, who has a capacity of resisting them, and the entire energy they derive from the original constitution of things. We use means to induce him to fix his attention on given objects, with a given purpose. And there is an energy in these means for the production of the end, although it is not strong enough to prevent an effectual resistance on his part; indeed, if it were, his character as a voluntary agent would be totally destroyed. He actually does resist. He will not fix his attention on a subject to which he is so desperately averse. And therefore is the influence of the Holy Spirit necessary, not to supply any deficiency of natural adaptation, but to superadd an energy, which could not have been imparted to the means themselves, without destroying the character of the agent to whom they were applied.

If the remarks I have made are just, they bear me out in saying, that, although a sinner cannot, of course, turn to God without that divine energy which, in all cases, connects the

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means with the end, he can do so without the influence of the Holy Spirit.

8. It has been said that ungodly men in general entertain the opinion of their ability to do their duty, and that the fondness with which they cling to this notion demonstrates its fallacy.

This is a strange argument in its principle. Every idea which wicked men generally entertain, it appears, must for that reason be false. Yet a sense of obligation and duty, of right and wrong, and other dictates of conscience, are found more or less distinctly in wicked men, at least as generally as the notion of their ability, all which by this process would be demonstrated to be erroneous. The scriptures, on the contrary, clearly intimate that the consciences of fallen men retain some remnants of truth, which constitute the law written in their hearts, and make them "a law unto themselves," Rom. ii. 14, 15; and the conviction of their ability for duty may, for aught that yet appears to the contrary, be one of these lingering principles of rectitude.

The argument is equally delusive in its details. If ungodly men at large do think that they have ability to do well, it is by no means an opinion to which they cling with any fondness. On the contrary, they are for the most part extremely glad to rid themselves of it, and they eagerly avail themselves of every expedient by which its force may be diminished. Hence the prevalence

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of the doctrine of fatalism among heathen nations, and the philosophical or more thinking portion of enlightened countries; hence the perpetual tendency, even in the commonest minds, to make excuses for misconduct involving more or less distinctly the notion that they could not help it; and hence the readiness with which the same sentiment has been imbibed from the preachers of the divine word, until, though still contended against by an honest conscience, it has spread over the whole surface of a professedly christian land. We have little doubt that, in defiance of inward remonstrances, multitudes believe that they can do nothing, that they are very glad to believe it, that many more would believe it if they could, and that even those who do not believe it think there must be some truth in it, since it is so often and so prominently made a part of pulpit instruction; but it is far worse than all this, that the expression of such a sentiment by the ministers of the gospel should fall in with the depraved wishes of their hearers, and either, on the one hand, tend to silence their inward monitor, and to release them from the last restraint placed on their vicious courses by their Creator, or, on the other, violate the dictates of conscience, shock the common sense of mankind, and give occasion to those whom our ministry should convince and persuade to turn the whole into ridicule and contempt. This we

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know to be the effect of such preaching upon ungodly men; and we have felt a more pungent affliction than we have power to express, that the wiles of Satan should thus have converted those by whose instrumentality his kingdom should have been shaken to its foundations, into agents for propagating the delusions in which its main stability consists.

To us it is a convincing proof that the sentiment which affirms man's inability is false, that, after all which has been said in favour of it, it cannot be fixed on the conscience of mankind. On account of the attempt to do so some men discard religion altogether, while others, though glad enough to avail themselves of it as a cloke for sin, and as a means of parrying every appeal to their consciences, do not believe it in their hearts. Why will any persons continue to labour in so hopeless a cause, and, above all, to identify religion with a contradiction of the common sense of mankind?

The mischievous idea which ungodly men do entertain of themselves, and of which it is so hard to divest them, is, not that they are able to do well, but that they are disposed to do well. They maintain that they have good hearts, that they wish to be good people, that they do the best they can, and would do better if they could. The are willing enough to confess weakness, but not wickedness. This is their ruinous self-

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flattery, exalting themselves in their own eyes, contradicting the testimony of God, leading to a rejection of the gospel, and inducing fatal repose. It is the contrary of this which they find it so hard to learn, and which, indeed, none ever do learn but as taught of God. Will my reader, if he knows anything of experimental piety, decide this question by an appeal to his own consciousness? What was the discovery which divine instruction led you to make? Was it not that your heart was determined against God and holiness, and so desperately determined as to yield to none but an Almighty power? You had imagined yourself disposed to good, you found that you loved evil; and the discovery was associated with a sense of vileness and emotions of self-loathing, which no perception of mere weakness, or want of power, could ever have produced.

9. It has been said, that, in maintaining the ability of man, we maintain also free-will.

Of all the imputations brought against us, this is perhaps the strangest, since it shows, not only an entire ignorance of the bearings of the controversy, but an almost incredible inattention to the language employed in it. We maintain that *man* is free; but we deny *the will* to be either free or bound, since, from its nature, it is not capable of being so. By free-will, however, we suppose our brethren to mean a disposition to goodness, an

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actual choice of holiness, or a willingness to choose it; and this our whole treatise goes, in the strongest possible manner, to deny to man. While we affirm that he can turn to God, we are continually affirming also that he will not. What other reason, indeed, can we assign why he does not? Those who assert that they have not power are the parties who have the opportunity, if they please, of cherishing the fancy of a good disposition in sinners, inasmuch as, if it existed, it could, according to them, be of no avail to conversion. Upon our principles, the whole stress of men's impenitence is laid upon their determination not to repent, which is exhibited in a much stronger light by us than by our brethren; and yet they are amusing themselves, and deluding their followers, by hurling at us the charge of maintaining free-will!

10. The novelty of the ground now taken, in asserting that man is able to do his duty, has been alleged as another ground of objection. 'Even Mr. Fuller,' 'it is said, and all divines of that class, have hitherto admitted a moral inability. Why need you go further?'

There is one sense in which the writer is far from pleading guilty to the charge thus adduced. He can revere no doctrine which is not as old as the bible; and, when it is shown that any he holds are less ancient than this, he will immediately relinquish them. He considers the tenets he

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opposes as the novelties. An antiquity of a few hundred years is totally insufficient to exempt them from this character.*

In reference to the controversy, however, which has been carried on in England within the last hundred years, in which the late Rev. Andrew Fuller bore a conspicuous part, and in reference to the ground which he has taken in it, the author must, perhaps, to some extent, though not to a very considerable one, admit the allegation of novelty.

Mr. Fuller maintained that the only obstruction to a sinner's repentance was the aversion of his heart to God, that is to say, an evil disposition—in this grand point entirely concurring with the present writer. This he still called inability; but, to separate from the term the inapplicable and mischievous ideas involved in its ordinary use, he adopted the method, previously used by some American and other divines, of calling this supposed inability of sinners to repent a moral inability. By this phrase he explains himself to mean such an inability as consists in a want of disposition; thus distinguishing it from a natural inability, the existence of which he denied.† This very statement leads directly to the conclusion to which we have come; for, if moral inability be snch as consists

* See Ryland's Memoirs of Fuller, chap. i. first edit.

† Ibid. p. 353.

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in a want of disposition, natural inability must be such as consists in a want of means, there being no other ideas to which the term ability has ever been referred but to these two, means and disposition. Mr. Fuller, therefore, really held, and in his earlier writings broadly stated, what we have maintained, namely, that man possesses full power to repent.*

The expediency of using the term moral inability, as Mr. Fuller did, to denote a wrong disposition, is highly questionable. It satisfied the disputants of past days; but at that time it rather concealed than exhibited the truth contended for, and ever since it has rather occasioned perplexity than facilitated inquiry. The existence of inability on the part of sinners, was the grand position which the opposing divines had maintained; and the adoption of the phrase in question permitted them to continue to maintain it. Its being qualified by the term *moral* was of little consequence; still, they said, you allow inability to exist, and whether it is natural or moral makes no difference—it is inability. Hence, although the argument of Mr. Fuller was triumphant, much less was gained by it than it contemplated and deserved; and to this day both clergy and laity are suffering, to a great extent, the very

* In his Gospel worthy of all Acceptation. See also a note in the Memoir by his Son, in the edition of his works of 1831, vol. i. p. lxii.

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same mischiefs from the notion of man's moral inability, which that of his natural inability had previously inflicted. The question really at issue has been evaded by the help of an ill chosen term; and the battle remains yet to be fought on the clear and open ground—Is there, on the part of a sinner, any inability at all?

It may be observed also, that, although the idea which Mr. Fuller attached to the phrase moral inability was clear and definite enough, it is liable to receive, and has often received, a very different interpretation. 'Moral inability!' says a reader of this language; 'and what is moral ability, or inability? Moral ability surely must be such an ability as is required to the performance of moral actions, or, at least, to the performance of actions morally good; and, if I have not such ability, no actions morally good can be required of me.' This is not at all an unnatural or unreasonable interpretation of the terms, but the idea that moral ability in this sense is wanting is altogether erroneous; since the ability to perform actions morally good, consists merely in the intelligent faculties and the power of moral judgments possessed by every man of a sane mind.

We are very willing to admit that the term inability may be applied in an analogical sense to denote the want of disposition, as cannot and impossible frequently are; but we must maintain that it is only in an analogical sense it can be so

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applied. This is the pivot of the whole dispute. If it be as we affirm, then the use of the terms in question is inappropriate; they are not literally and strictly true, that is, they are not true in their ordinary and apparent sense. We do not deny that words may be, and often are, used out of their strict and literal meaning; but words should not be so used in argument, and most especially not the words which express the very ground of debate, and the precise point of contention. Metaphors and analogies are excellent for the illustration of an admitted sentiment, but wretchedly confounding in the examination of a contested one. If we wish any clearness or conclusiveness of argument, nothing is more important than to reduce every principal word we employ to its strict and literal meaning, and never to use it in any other; but above all things is this desirable, we may say it is indispensable, with the primary terms. On this ground we conceive the phrase moral inability should be altogether dropped, inasmuch as it proceeds upon an analogy which is extremely likely to mislead; let us rather know in plain terms what is meant by it, and make that the subject of our discussions. There is no difficulty in this. The terms moral inability mean a want of disposition, a phrase which ought in all cases to become its substitute. What must we think, if the clearness and simplicity which it throws into the argument should

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be felt as an objection to this proposal? If the terms moral inability are to be retained on any reasonable ground, it must be because they are strictly and properly applicable to a want of disposition; an opinion which we shall be extremely happy to see any one attempt to establish.

If the term inability be in strictness inappropriate to the subject, there is the more reason it should be abandoned, because there is a perpetual and irresistible tendency in all upon whom the argument bears to understand it literally. Thus, when we urge a sinner to repent, he replies—but you tell me I am unable; in this case plainly taking the word unable in its strict, and and not in its analogical sense. If we have used it in that sense, he fairly repels our exhortation, and may defy us to meet his argument: if we have not used it in this sense, it behoves us then to tell him so, and to say—I do not mean that you you are unable; you are strictly and truly able to repent. And if this is the point to which a single observation of an ungodly man may drive us, why should we set out with the tenacious and prominent use of a phrase which we must so soon abandon, and apparently contradict?

The names of those who originated and conducted the great and important discussion respecting the duty of man, called the modern question, deserve to be had in everlasting remem-

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brance, nor can the author ever forget, or fail most gratefully to acknowledge, his deep obligations to them. But he feels no apology to be due for differing from them. One thing they taught him was to think for himself; and he is sure they would be happy in having led others to a view, in any degree clearer and more accurate than their own. He has no name to add weight to his opinions; but he claims not to be judged at a human bar. Why would his readers inquire whether he agrees with Mr. Fuller? Let them ask only whether he is consistent with the oracles of God.

If it were of any importance, however (to the writer it is certainly matter of gratification), it might be stated, that in this sentiment he is far from being alone. He has reason to believe, that not a few of the most able and most useful ministers of the gospel in various denominations mainly, if not entirely, agree with him; and that the same sentiments are entertained by many judicious christians in private life, who are longing to see their teachers escape from their bonds. He has a cheering confidence that the bonds are loosening, and is sorry that any worthy men should identify themselves with a falling system.

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CHAP. XVII.

Considerations for those who may not be convinced.

HOWEVER willing we may be to hope that the preceding pages have carried conviction to some of our readers, it were too much to suppose this to have been the case with them all. We shall probably part with some of them without having arrived at this result. Concerning them we have no wish, but that they would give repeated and serious examination to whatever may seem to them adapted to the attainment of truth. If, after all, they retain the opinion which we have combated, we leave two points for their consideration.

1. Those who find it hard to admit that a sinner can turn to God, should consider whether it is not quite as hard to maintain firmly that he cannot. The position we have taken is this, that a sinner can come to Christ, whether he will or not; that is, suppose either case, that he will or that he will not, still he can come. The opposite sentiment fully and fairly expressed is, that, whether he will or not, a sinner cannot come. If our brethren in the argument do not mean this, it is quite time they should be explicit with themselves, and penetrate the fallacy which must be lurking somewhere amidst the terms they employ. If they do fairly mean this, really it is rather a hard

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case. In one alternative, indeed, that is on the supposition that the sinner will not come, the alleged impossibility might be of little consequence, though still it would be calling things by wrong names, and withholding from God the glory which is his due. But let us take the other alternative, and say, that if a sinner would come to Christ he cannot: what are we to think of this? It will doubtless be met by an immediate cry, that a sinner will not come, that such a supposition never will be realized, and that therefore it is unfair. We know that such a supposition never will be realized; but we cannot allow it on that account to be unfair. The proper way to try a sentiment is to make various suppositions, as many, indeed, as it will possibly admit of, and see how it appears in those varied lights; for every portion of truth is like a fragment of complex mechanism, it will fit nowhere but in its place, and it will fit exactly there. We are willing that our position should be tried on either supposition, either that a sinner will come or that he will not; and, if our brethren are not willing that theirs should be put to a similar test, it must be because they either have, or ought to have, some want of confidence in their argument. If the argument itself will not bear this examination, it is undoubtedly fallacious; and every man who has any regard to truth or honesty should immediately renounce it. Let us proceed to the trial.

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One of the supposable cases involved in the statement that, whether he will or not, a sinner cannot come to Christ, is, that a sinner may be willing to come to Christ, and yet not able. Let us then imagine such a person before us. By the supposition, he is willing to come to Christ; his resistance is subdued, the enmity of his heart has given way, he has renounced sin and the world, he is in a state of right feeling towards God, and quite ready to return and submit himself to the appointed Saviour; but—he cannot! What is the meaning of this? He cannot? What is to prevent him? Let it be explicitly stated what cause can interpose its baneful influence to obstruct this blessed return. We have heard of many things which make a sinner unwilling, and so prevent his conversion; but here is a case supposed in which all these hindrances are removed, and yet there is the strange mystery of some other hindrance, to prevent a willing sinner from bowing to the Saviour! In the name of all that is reasonable and honest, we demand that this hidden, mysterious, and as yet nameless power, should be dragged forth to light, that we may have an opportunity of ascertaining its nature, if not of counteracting its influence.

Nor is this all. In what a pitiable condition is the sinner thus placed! He has been told to come to Christ, under assurances of mercy; and he is willing to come, but he cannot. The state

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of his mind is altered as prescribed, but not his condition of wrath. Not having come to Christ, he is still under condemnation, although he is no longer in love with sin, nor at enmity with his Maker. He is bound down for destruction, therefore, by something else than his sins; he would escape, but he cannot. There is something in this representation truly horrible, something adapted to dissociate from the perishing sinner every feeling of blame, and to render him an object of unmixed compassion. Hitherto we have been accustomed to regard him as liable to perish only because he was wedded to his sins, and as rushing on destruction in a way of wilfulness and criminality, which rendered his punishment as just as it is awful. But everything must now be viewed in a different light. Unfortunate wretch! If he could, he would escape. He has no love of sin, no enmity to his Maker, no aversion to the Saviour; but some dreadful power will not suffer him to accomplish his wishes, and binds him over to perdition. Perish, then, miserable victim! The whole creation will sympathize with thee in thy fall.

Once more. What must we think of the author of such a state of things as this? Is there in such a condition anything merciful, anything equitable? Is it not one from which all our feelings revolt with horror? And yet, if the sentiment under consideration be true, the pos-

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sible existence of such a condition must be ascribed to the most glorious and blessed being in the universe; for *he* has determined the details of our natural and moral situation. How can it for a moment be supposed, that a being infinitely just and merciful should have adopted a constitution capable, under any circumstances, of producing such an alternative as this, and requiring only a due consideration of what he himself has most earnestly pressed upon our attention in order actually to produce it; while, at the same time, he professes to have made a most gracious provision for the salvation of the guilty upon their return to him, and calls and invites sinners, who, when they hear and would accept the call, find unexpectedly that they cannot do so, and sink helplessly into hell, with all the apparatus of mercy turned into a bitter mockery of their ruin?

Every one must be convinced that the ever blessed and glorious God is infinitely remote from the possibility of such an imputation; nor do we wish to insinuate, for a moment, that those who are opposed to us on the question at issue make any approach towards such an imputation; they probably regard it with as deep horror as ourselves: but it is not the less true, that the consequences we have exhibited are involved in the sentiment they maintain; and, if they are to be avoided, it can only be by abandoning their

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ground. Let them recollect their assertion—that, whether he will or not, a sinner cannot come to Christ; and then let them trace our deduction from it most rigidly, determined to detect its fallacy if it be fallacious, but equally determined to relinquish their tenet if it be correct.

The reader can scarcely have failed to perceive, in some points of this argument, an appearance of contradiction and perplexity. We have spoken, for example, of a sinner's being no longer an enemy to God, and yet not being reconciled to him; when, in fact, not to be an enemy is the same thing as being reconciled. We have been compelled to speak in this way, because the statement against which we argue overlooks the fact, that the terms coming to Christ, being reconciled to God, &c. are simply expressive of a state of mind; a state of mind being that, also, with which salvation is connected. To say, therefore, that a man cannot be reconciled to God, even if he ceases to be an enemy to him, is to say that he cannot be in a certain state of mind, even if he is in that very state of mind; a direct and obvious contradiction, when drawn out from the familiar, yet ill-understood phraseology, under which the unobservant suffer it to be concealed.

2. The assertors of the inability of man should inform us what man can do. They have been candid enough on certain occasions to allow that

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he can do *something*, though his ability does not, in their view, correspond with his duty; but it is important that they should describe particularly what man can, and what he cannot do, and draw an intelligible line of demarcation between these two great provinces of action and duty. The distinction is unquestionably of considerable moment, and less attention has been bestowed upon it by our brethren than it deserves. So far as their ideas upon it can be collected, they appear to hold, that, although man can neither be nor do anything spiritually good (that is, good in disposition), yet he can use the means for this end; and one writer, who has been unusually explicit upon this subject, has given us the following statement:—

"Man is able, and ought to examine the evidences of christianity, and the contents of the inspired volume. He is able, and ought to attend on the ordinances of religion, to retire for serious reflection on what announcements have been made by the preacher, and to examine his own heart and life by the infallible test of scripture. He is able, and ought to go upon his knees before God, for confession of sin, and supplication for mercy and power. He is able, and ought to avoid the company of the ungodly, and to seek intercourse with those who fear God. He is able, and ought to observe the dealings of God with him in providence, and inquire what

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influence they have upon him. He is able, and ought to consider the solemnities of death, judgment, and the eternal state, and the descriptions given of those who are prepared. Will any one deny these things to be within the compass of his own ability, or affirm them to be excluded from the most obvious duties? In this course every one may cherish hope."*

It is obvious, upon the very face of this statement, that these defenders of man's inability allow and maintain his ability also, in the same sense and to the same extent as ourselves. We have asserted nothing more than that man can use the means of being and doing all that he ought to be, of which every reader may satisfy himself by referring to our definition of power, page 53; and this, it seems, a part of our brethren in this controversy freely allow. There is, therefore, no real difference between us; and the discussion reduces itself to these two points: 1, Whether the means we possess of being what we ought to be are sufficient; and, 2, whether the possession of such means is properly called power. Both these points have already engaged our attention, see pages 33, 53. We shall here only make two remarks. The first is, that, if we suppose God to have required certain effects to be produced by means which are not sufficient, we attach to him the imputation of "gathering

* Douglas's Letter to the Author, page 15.

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where he has not strawed," which he repels with so much indignation when insinuated by the "wicked and slothful servant," Matt. xxv. 24, 26. The second is, that, in all ordinary cases, the possession of sufficient means is considered as the possession of power. He that has sufficient means of doing anything *can do it.* If this be an error, let it be corrected in common life; if it be a truth, why should it be rejected in religion?

If we accurately interpret the views of our brethren upon this point, it is clear that, with all their array of hostility against us, they really hold the very tenet for which they make us fight, and for defending which they visit us sometimes with such severe animadversions--rather an unkind return, by the bye, for our trouble in vindicating their sentiments. Whatever injurious consequences may result from the sentiment itself, the mischief lies as much at their door as at ours; nor can it be much to their advantage, that what they affirm in one form of words they strenuously deny in another. If, on the contrary, we do not understand them correctly—if they do not intend that man can use the means of being what he ought to be, it will materially aid the discussion if they will have the kindness to explain themselves more fully, and specify distinctly what man can do; a thing which is manifestly important, and ought not to be difficult.

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CHAP. XVIII.

Of the necessity of the Holy Spirit as implying contrariety of disposition.

We have already seen that the necessity of the Spirit's influence to the conversion of a sinner implies something respecting the condition of a sinner himself; namely, that, without such aid, he would never turn to God. It might be supposed, by many it has been supposed, to imply that he is destitute of power to do so; a sentiment which we have been examining, and endeavouring to disprove. What then does it imply? To this we have already answered in substance, that it implies contrariety of disposition; a statement which we now proceed more fully to develop and establish.

It is the more needful to do this, because, as there is a strong tendency on the one hand to maintain that man has not power to do well, so there is a tendency on the other to imagine that he has a disposition to do so. Men will much rather confess weakness than wickedness, and they cling fondly to the delusive imagination that they would be right if they could. We sorrowfully believe, on the contrary, that the disposition of man is directly and powerfully evil. It is not our business here to enter into the proofs of this

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at large; but to show how it arises out of the doctrine we have established, namely, that of the necessity of the Spirit's influence in order to conversion.

If this doctrine be true, it is but the same thing in other words to say, that, without the Spirit, repentance will never take place. Now, although there may be an endless diversity of circumstances, there can be only two causes operating to prevent any action: either we have not power, or we have not disposition to perform it. All hindrances may be reduced to these, nor can any other be imagined. If the Holy Spirit, therefore, be necessary to repentance, it must be either because we have not power, or because we have not disposition, to repent without him; but it has been shown that we have power—wherefore it must be because we have not disposition.

We now take it as proved that we have power to repent. If, in addition to this, we have also a disposition to repent, it is manifest that we shall do so of our own accord, every action being certainly performed when we have both the power and the disposition to perform it. In such a case the Holy Spirit would not be necessary, seeing that we should repent independently of him; but we have seen that his blessed influence is necessary; whence it follows, that, however we may flatter ourselves, we have not a disposition to repent. To conceive that we are of

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ourselves disposed to repent, and to do everything right if we could, or as far as we can, is directly to deny the need of the Spirit's energy.

No doubt, there are often arising in the minds of men certain thoughts, or perhaps feelings, on the subject of religion, which may be mistaken for a disposition to repent. These are nothing more than admonitions of conscience, or emotions of fear or desire. At their greatest amount they have no prevailing influence, they lead to no determination, to no action. In this way, and to this extent, the heart may be affected by many things at the same time, and inclinations excited towards different and even opposite objects. It is manifest that such inclinations are of no practical value, and that they indicate nothing respecting a man's character, or what may be expected from it. He may have some inclination to religion, but more to worldliness; and so may be always worldly, in defiance of his inclinations to religion. That which determines character is the prevailing inclination, or what we have strictly defined to be disposition, as distinct from inclination; and it is this we mean, when we say that man has no disposition to repent. He may, and often does feel convicted, alarmed, desirous, but his prevailing feelings are always earthly; and what we conclude from the necessity of the Holy Spirit is, that they always will be so. If the better feelings should ever arise

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to a prevailing degree, in that case, repentance would take place without the Spirit, which, as we have seen, will never be the case.

The necessity of the Spirit's influence, therefore, establishes the unwelcome and melancholy fact, that our natural disposition is opposed to God, to our duty, and to our welfare. We love sin, we hate our Maker. This is afflictive; but what follows is far more so. Our disposition, it appears, is thus hostile to God and to our duty, in the midst of circumstances most powerfully adapted to render it otherwise. God has exhibited himself to us in colours of the brightest glory, and of the most touching mercy. Everything just and weighty in obligation, everything solemn and impressive in prospect, everything winning and constraining in kindness, everything powerful and generous in motive, everything by which every chord in the heart might be touched, has been set before us; and yet our disposition is hostile to God, and reckless of our own ruin. Nor is this all. It is desperately so. So wedded to sin, so bent upon self-indulgence, that not all which God has said ever will induce even serious consideration; no patience, no repetition of his calls, no earnestness of importunity, no approach of terrors, will ever change this melancholy mind. His Spirit alone must achieve the transformation. The intensity of evil disposition which this evinces, therefore, is most ex-

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treme and astonishing. It can find no parallel. In other cases considerations of duty, of gratitude, of interest, find their way to the heart by which for a time they may have been resisted; but in this, although infinitely the most important, an ill disposition reigns so triumphantly as to repel every attempt. He that fears his fellow-creature defies his Maker; he that is grateful to an earthly benefactor insults an heavenly one; he that shrinks from bodily harm plunges his soul into hell; he that attaches boundless importance to time trifles with eternity. And all this will he continue to do, amidst the revealed glories of heaven and terrors of hell; amidst the warnings of wrath and the wooings of mercy; amidst the tears of the Saviour and the lamentations of angels; amidst the reproofs of his conscience and the anticipations of destruction. Such, alas! is man. What words can adequately describe a disposition so deplorable?

The second part of our plan, which was to examine the aspect of the Spirit's work on the previous condition of man, has now been executed, and the result of it may be summed up in a few words. The necessity of the Spirit's influence in order to conversion does not argue a want of power in man, but it does argue a contrariety of disposition. It remains for us to observe, in the last place, the aspect of the Spirit's work in relation to the ways of God.

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PART III.

THE ASPECT OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN RELATION TO THE WAYS OF GOD.

THE ministration of the Spirit, or the employment of his almighty energy to accomplish the transformation of a sinner's heart, is a part of his general administration towards the children of men. As such it has by no means an isolated character, but stands connected with all other parts of the same administration; and in this connexion it has features of great excellency and importance. Some of these we have been led indirectly to notice, in the preceding portion of this volume; but they call for a more distinct exhibition.

CHAP. I.

Of the ministration of the Spirit in its relation to a sinner individually.

FROM the doctrine we have laid down it results, that the blessed Spirit, when he enters into the heart of a sinner to turn him to God, performs this work of love unsought. The aspects of this ministration of the Spirit are now to be considered.

1. It is impossible not to observe immediately

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its pre-eminent grace. How passing strange is the fact, that the blessed Spirit, infinitely holy as he is, and burning for the divine glory, will enter such a breast, and wrest out of a sinner's hand the very weapon with which he is about, both to defy his Maker, and to destroy his own soul! This is going immeasurably beyond all that justice requires, and is the utmost length of kindness to a guilty worm. God not only provides the blessedness, but gives the disposition to embrace it; herein giving what also he justly demands, and providing for the payment of that to himself which is righteously due to him from his creatures.

To this it must be added, that the gift of the Holy Spirit secures the attainment of the great and unspeakable blessings exhibited in the gospel. A sinner is then no longer left to trifle with salvation; but the hitherto prevailing enmity of his heart is overcome, and he is made willing in the day of divine power. He resists no more; but, led by the Spirit, humbly bows to the sceptre of redeeming mercy, and every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of faith. He thus beomes an actual partaker of salvation itself, and enters into the enjoyment of all its privileges; being justified by faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also he has access unto the grace wherein he stands, and rejoices in hope of

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the glory of God, Rom. v. 1, 2. How pre-eminently gracious must the work be, which leads to such immeasurable and eternal blessedness! Without the influence of the Spirit a sinner would be a wretch undone, even in the midst of mercies; with it, he becomes unutterably and for ever blest.

2. This ministration of the Spirit is not universal, but peculiar. This is known by the fruits; since, wherever the Spirit is given, repentance and conversion are actually produced. From the very fact, therefore (even if there were no other evidence), that only some persons are converted, the inference must necessarily be drawn, that only to some is the Spirit given. With this inevitable conclusion the declarations of holy writ fully agree; but it is important to show that the burden of its proof does not lie upon them. Those who dislike them or their import, may conceive them to be blotted out of the book of God if they please; we call upon them to read in another book the same lesson. The fact is before their eyes, and cannot be obliterated; why should they find fault with the mere words which record it?

What can be the cause of this peculiarity? Whence can it have originated? By what influence can the course of this celestial stream have been determined? Certainly by God himself, since no other being has power or opportunity

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to interpose in this matter. Of the Spirit he giveth to every man severally as it pleaseth him. But are there any known causes which may have guided his determination? Does he give the Spirit to any one because he deserves it, because he has made a proper improvement of other favours, because he has been considerate and prayerful, because he has been upright and moral? And does he withhold it from another because he has been the contrary? Or is it merely according to his will and arbitrary pleasure?

To these inquiries it is obvious to answer, that God has certainly not acted without a reason, and a good one. No wise being doos so, least of all one who is infinitely wise. The idea that he has distributed his Spirit, or any other blessing, according to his *mere* will and pleasure, however sanctioned by one class of divines or attacked by another, is not only unsupported by scripture, but directly opposed to it. Hear, for example, the words of our Lord. "At that time Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it *seemed good* in thy sight," Matt. xi. *25, 26.* When we say that a person does anything *merely* because he will, we mean that he had no regard to the character or tendency of the action itself;

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but not such is the aspect of discriminating grace. What God has done he has well weighed, and has done it because "it *seemed good* in his sight."

The general nature of the reasons under which God has acted is also to be ascertained with sufficient clearness. There is but one grand reason for which he does all things, and that is the glory of his own name. With a view to this end, doubtless, he has decided in every instance the question of the communication of the Spirit. That we should be able in all cases to trace this tendency of his ways it would be unreasonable to expect, with our limited capacity and our present ignorance; but this affords us no just cause to doubt its reality. Upon a large scale some views of it are already apparent, and are opened to us by inspired authority. "Ye see your calling, brethren; how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence," 1 Cor. i. 26—29.

One thing is certain, that whatever the reasons

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may be which have actuated the Almighty in any particular case, they have never been derived from the deserts or excellency of man himself. To none has the Spirit been given because of his wisdom, or rank, or power, or humility, or virtue, or any other excellency, natural or moral; and this principle has been adopted out of regard to the grand design that God may be glorified in all. Were it otherwise, some might have cause for glorying in his presence; which may not be, seeing it is written, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord," 1 Cor. i. 31.

The ministration of the Spirit, then, is discriminating and sovereign; a point in which God does not render to all alike, but severally to each as it seemeth good in his sight. This simple and inevitable truth is to many persons a grand stumbling-block, and cause of complaint. God, then, it is said, makes a difference among men, and does not give us all the same facilities for salvation. But again we say, that the attack ought to be made, not against the doctrine, but against the fact. Suppose the doctrine buried in oblivion, the fact will be irresistible, so long as you see some around you converted and others in their sins. Whatever ground there may be of complaint, therefore, there can be no alteration.

But, after all, is there any foundation for complaint? The question to be decided is not

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what has been God's conduct to others, but what has been his conduct to me. Has he done me any wrong? Has he withheld from me any means or advantage, requisite to my having a fair and full opportunity of fleeing from the wrath to come? If he has, it is to be found in the examination of my own circumstances, and not in comparing them with those of others. Now, in the closest inspection of God's dealings with himself, no sinner can find cause of complaint; on the contrary, he is treated, not only with justice, but with kindness; and, if he fails of salvation, it will be only through a wilful and perverse neglect of his opportunities. It is true, his next neighbour is dealt with yet more kindly; but that makes, and can make, no difference to him: his case is what it is in itself, and so ever will remain.

The general view which we take of the dispensation of the Spirit is, that it is characterized by pre-eminent kindness, and sovereign discrimination. It may be pleasant, ere we close, to observe in what relation the ministration of the Spirit stands to the ways of God in their most general aspects, considered as consisting in, either the exercise of personal kindness, the administration of moral government, or the conducting of an effectual agency.

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CHAP. II.

Of the ministration of the Spirit as connected with the work of redemption generally.

It is, of course, with no other part of the divine ways than the work of redemption that the ministration of the Spirit is connected. The whole office of this blessed agent, so far as man is concerned, is to remedy an existing mischief in his character; and the assumption of such an office clearly implies, both that he is fallen from his original excellency, and that by divine mercy a restorative process is undertaken. The influence of the Spirit could not have been called for under any other circumstances; and the administration of it is a part of the method by which the redemption of men from sin and misery is accomplished.

It is not, however, the first part of this method. By transgression men are fallen into a state of guilt and condemnation, which not only forfeits all title to the favour of God, but actually shuts them out from the possibility of its communication without some preparatory measure. The law requires to be fulfilled, and the righteousness of the lawgiver to be maintained, at the

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same time that mercy is extended to the criminal, and an effectual provision for this must be made, before any exercise of mercy is actually entered upon. Hence we say, therefore, that the gift of his dear Son to die for sinners is prior, in the dispensations of God, to the gift of his Holy Spirit. The communication of the Spirit presupposes the death of Christ, without which no good thing could ever have been conferred on the guilty; it is, indeed, the fruit of his dying pains, and is poured out to the honour of his love, and for the glory of his name.

But this is not all. It might be asked, Why, although Christ had died, should the Holy Spirit be imparted? Was not the way of salvation fully opened by the blood-shedding of the Son of God? Undoubtedly it was; and, if men would have availed themselves of it without an extrinsic influence, there would have been no occasion for the operation of the eternal Spirit. The introduction of this glorious agent proceeds upon the supposition that, although the way of salvation is open, the determination of man's heart is so fixed in sin that he will not avail himself of it, even when favoured with the amplest opportunities, and addressed by the most powerful motives. Such, on God's authority, the fact is declared to be; and it is to meet this feature of the case that the ministration of the Spirit is superadded to the work of the Lord

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Jesus Christ. It is to induce sinners to receive him, to cause his enemies to submit themselves, and to bring them, in this method, to the actual possession of redemption.

1. Now it is manifest, that one grand and important feature of this administration relates to the final issue of the work of redemption itself. Without it, although a vast provision had been made for the salvation of sinners, not a single sinner would be saved; and, in this respect, a character of fruitlessness and disappointment would have been given to this great undertaking, which could be neither gratifying to the benevolence of the Most High, nor conducive to his glory. To prevent so undesirable a result, and to secure a large and sufficient measure of success in the actual salvation of men, the divine Spirit is sent forth, with his almighty energy to work effectually in their hearts, to vanquish their enmity, and to bring them to the Saviour, that he may see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

2. Another principal aspect of the ministration of the Spirit has relation to the happiness of man. When God determined to send his Spirit unsought into the breasts of particular persons whom he foreknew, while it was for his own glory, it was also for their good. It was because he loved them with an everlasting love, that he thus purposed to draw them with loving-kind-

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ness. It is a pre-eminent illustration of his personal kindness towards the objects he had in view.

3. It is to be observed, however, that the ministration of the Spirit is kept altogether separate from the moral government of God. He requires obedience, he denounces threatenings against sin, he will judge and punish the ungodly, quite irrespectively of the influence of the Spirit; as it is manifest he must, since he does, and will do, all this to multitudes of persons to whom the Spirit is not given. Now the moral government of God consists in the method of dealing with men by means of commands and motives, in the prospect of a final retribution; and, since this comprehends many to whom the Spirit is not given, it is plain that the moral government of God is carried on altogether irrespectively of the ministration of the Spirit.

The gift of the Spirit is a dispensation of eminent personal kindness, and of glorious effectual power. It becomes Him so to work who can accomplish all things according to the counsel of his own will. It is honourable for him thus to secure to his Son the joy set before him, and to defeat the awful malignity of a rebellious world. It is an attitude in which, with manifest justice, he claims to himself all the glory of a sinner's salvation. It was his love which provided a Saviour, whom yet every sinner would

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have rejected without his overcoming grace. In this, therefore, as in his other works, God himself is all in all. To him alone, and in every respect, is it to be ascribed, that a single sinner has been rescued from hell and brought to heaven; and to Him alone will the glory be rendered, while saints are happy or immortality endures. Amen, and Amen!

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PRACTICAL ADDRESSES

TO A SINNER,

ON THE PRINCIPLES MAINTAINED IN THE FOREGOING TREATISE.

THE design of these Practical Addresses is threefold. It is, first, to exhibit the principles which the author has been advocating in a form wholly apart from controversy. When a sentiment is much discussed, there is danger of its being supposed to be fit for nothing else; and persons who do not like controversy, or who may not be apt at argument, may put it aside as possessing no interest for them. Such an impression it is hoped the following pages may obviate or correct, and convince the reader that the principle which has been vindicated is capable also of being applied.

The author wishes, secondly, to bring his principles to a new and additional test. If they are of any value, that value lies in their just and forcible application to the conscience of a sinner. The question, therefore, is a fair one—How would you converse with a sinner on these principles? This question he has thus endeavoured to answer, whether satisfactorily to his readers they, of course, will judge; but, if it were not satisfactorily to himself, he would immediately suspect and review his principles.

But, above all, the author has been desirous of closing his book with these addresses, because, on so

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deeply important a subject as religion, he could not bear to write a volume of mere controversy. His readers, like himself, are sinners hastening to judgment and eternity; and he earnestly requests that they will do him the favour to read the following pages as addressed personally to themselves. Though he may never see them on earth, they will see him at the bar of God; and fain would he have every reader pour a blessing on him there! It will be either a blessing or a curse.

A brief observation may be necessary respecting the manner in which these addresses are framed. They will, of course, be found to contain assertion and not argument, as from the nature of the case is inevitable; but an attentive reader will find no difficulty in referring to the pages in the preceding work, where the several points have been argued at length. The author has throughout avoided the use of the word power, the double meaning of which almost inevitably introduces perplexity into the plainest statements. Instead of this term, he has used a just and exact equivalent; he has spoken of having the means of doing anything, which is the precise definition of power. He begs to add, finally, that these addresses are not to be regarded as comprehending all he would say to a sinner in the circumstances supposed, but only so much as may be connected with, or illustrative of, the sentiments which have been under consideration; and as presenting, even in this view, rather a skeleton than a complete body, the principles upon which the author would frame his appeal rather than the motives by which he would enforce it.

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ADDRESS I.

DEAR READER,

I MUST address you, not as an innocent, but as a sinful person. It is not that I have pleasure in regarding you as such, but the word of God declares us all to be so; and his word is truth. I am willing, however, to converse with you on this subject rationally and coolly; indeed, I earnestly wish you to inquire into the grounds on which you are charged with guilt. By all means clear or defend yourself, if you can.

The general accusation brought against you by your Maker, is that you have not loved him with all your heart. Into the proof of this allegation I suppose it is not necessary to enter; yon are probably too well convinced of its truth to dispute it for a moment.

I may imagine, however, that, while you admit the fact that you have not thus loved God, you dispute its criminality. Why, you ask, am I therefore condemned as a sinner? The question is highly reasonable, and extremely important; I readily confess, that it behoves one who brings the charge of sin against you to be able to establish it by clear and conclusive proofs; and I will endeavour to meet your demand, as honestly as I hope you have put it.

1. That for which God censures you is not having loved him; or, in other words, he blames you for not having possessed a particular state of mind. This, therefore, is the first point upon which your inquiry bears. Upon what ground of justice does God require you to possess any particular state of mind at all?

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There are beings around you, I mean those of the brute creation, whose allowed occupation is nothing more than the gratification of their appetites, and the following of their several impulses. But this, it seems, is not the case with you. God requires of you something peculiar and specific. He is not satisfied that you should merely eat and drink, and act out the varied passions which may arise within you; but he prescribes a particular course, and demands this at your hands. Why should this be? It is because the constitution of your nature qualifies you to fulfil the demand. You are not a mere machine, the sport of circumstances, the victim of fate, or the helpless slave of your passions. To a certain extent, which we shall define presently, you have the means of attaining whatever state of mind you think proper.

It is your nature to love or to hate, to rejoice or to be sorry, as you find inducements to do so. You have also the means of judging of the various inducements which may be presented to you in every case, in order to estimate their proper force, and to determine how far you will yield to them or resist them. To qualify you for this exercise of judgment, God has given you a perception of good and evil, a sense of right and wrong, by which the character of all inducements may be ascertained, and your course respecting them decided accordingly. When you perceive any to be either right or wrong, you have the means also of establishing or preventing their influence, both by the superior force of the sense of duty itself, and by turning your attention to such considerations as are adapted to produce that effect. Now, since this is

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the case, and you may, by consideration, bring your mind to any state you think proper, it is manifestly not unjust that God should require your mind to be in some specific condition.

It is plain, indeed, as we have said, that this capacity of being what you think proper is not unbounded. It is limited by two considerations; the one is the proper force of the inducements presented to you, and the other is your capacity of appreciating them. As the state of your mind is to be regulated by consideration, it follows of course, that the regulation of it can go no further than the proper force of the topics set before you for this end, and your capacity of appreciating them. If God should have required of you anything beyond these limits, I will make no attempt to maintain its justice; but if, on the contrary, the commands of your Maker are confined to the extent within which you are able to be what you think proper, and are in all cases accompanied with inducements both suitable and sufficient, and well adapted to your apprehension, upon what ground can their justice be impugned?

2. Let us pass on, then, from the fact of such requirement, the justice of which we will take to be admitted, to the tenor of the requirement itself. What is it that your Maker requires of you?

Receive this information from the lips of our divine Lord, Luke x. 27: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

Such is the law of God given to man, and to every man, as the rule and measure of his demand. You

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may observe, that it intimates the existence of strength to be what it commands: otherwise, what meaning could there be in the language itself, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength," if we had no strength for this purpose? You should observe also, very particularly, that the employment of our strength in the way prescribed is the whole scope of the law. It specifies nothing in reference to the quantity of strength which we may or may not have; but, taking this at whatever it may happen to be, it makes our actual strength the precise limit of its demands. With all our strength we are to love God, but no further. You will mark, therefore, how accurately the requirements of your Maker observe the limitation which justice demands; they extend no further than the space within which you are able to be what you think proper.

3. It still remains to ascertain whether the requirements of God are accompanied by suitable and sufficient inducements.

Here let us recollect, that all which God requires of us is to love him, the outward obedience he prescribes being no other than the fruit of love. Has he, therefore, presented to us suitable and sufficient inducements to love him? The question surely needs no answer. He is the Lord our God; and out of this fact alone inducements of unquestionable sufficiency arise. He is God our Maker, the author of our being, with all its powers; and what obligation is more strong than this, that the parent should be treated with affectionate kindness by his offspring? He is the Lord our Maker: a being of infinite

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superiority, excellency, and majesty, in comparison with whom we are less than nothing and vanity, and with whose glory our whole hearts should be identified. Can other or stronger inducements be needful, ere we have cause enough to love him?

4. The last question to be asked is, whether these inducements to love God are set before us in a way suited to our apprehension. I imagine you can entertain little doubt upon this point. It is impossible to conceive either sentiment or language more plain or simple. It is only that children ought to love their parents; a truth which we perceive with the utmost clearness, and the force of which we feel instantaneously, not merely because of its evidence, but because it is intimately interwoven with our own relations. No sentiment could be better adapted to our apprehension than this.

Let us now recall what has been said. God requires you to possess a specific disposition. You are able to attain specific dispositions, so far as suitable and sufficient inducements are intelligibly set before you. Suitable and sufficient inducements are thus set before you, in reference to that particular disposition which God requires you to cherish, namely, love to himself. You are therefore justly required to love God; and if so, in not having loved him you have been guilty of sin. Let me exhibit this to you in another light.

Understand, then, that your power over your own mind lies entirely in your capacity of attention and consideration. The state of your mind always corresponds with the things you think of; and, when

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you wish it to be in any particular state, if there are any intelligible topics suited and sufficient to induce the state desired, think duly of them, and it will be effected. This is the constitution of your mind: it cannot act otherwise, and in this method it will act invariably. In order to love God, therefore, what had you to do? Obviously to think of him. Reflecting upon the fact that he is the author of your being, and of all your powers; dwelling upon his boundless glory and excellency in this relation to you; doing this with all the helps to be derived from his works and from his word; and persisting in it, until these topics had been adequately apprehended by your understanding, and had exerted their just influence upon your feelings; doing this, you would have loved him. Why did you refuse consideration to these things? You knew they were right and important, much more important than the other matters to which you surrendered your thoughts; yet you did surrender your thoughts to other things, and to things which have not only left you without love to God, but have induced an habitual and confirmed aversion to him. Your own judgment condemns you; and God, who is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things, how shall not he condemn you? Acknowledge, therefore, that you are justly reckoned a sinner; that your mouth is stopped from every excuse, and that you have only to plead guilty before God.

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ADDRESS II.

I HAVE already endeavoured to show you, dear reader, that for not having loved God you are justly chargeable with sin. I must now set before you another painful but certain truth; namely, that for sin God will bring you into judgment. Your conduct he not only considers to be wrong, but he holds you answerable for it. He has suspended upon it consequences of the deepest interest. If you had loved him with all your heart, you would have found in his friendship unspeakable and perpetual blessedness; and, seeing that you have not done so, wrath is revealed against you from heaven. A day of retribution is already announced, when he will say, "As for this mine enemy, who would not that I should reign over him, cast him into outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth."

The aspect of these things is in the utmost degree solemn and awful; and you are perfectly justified in inquiring into the reasonableness of such an administration. You will perhaps propose some such question as this: But, allowing it to be just that I should love God, what right has he to make this demand of me, and to call me to an account for my conduct?

His right to do so springs out of the one great fact, that he is your Creator. As the author of your being, the arrangement of everything relating to your condition lay in his own bosom; and he has a right to require from his creatures whatever return agrees with their capacity and their circumstances. Wherever

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anything is given, there something may be required; and much or little, according to that which has been bestowed. You act upon this principle with an entire persuasion of its justice, when you call to account an undutiful child, a disobedient servant, or an agent to whom you have entrusted property. Your Maker does nothing more respecting yourself. Being a creature of God, therefore, you are in fact under a rightful obligation to love him, from which, dislike it as you may, you can never escape. The only questions for you to ask on this subject are, Whether the return which God requires is greater than the means bestowed; and whether the punishment he denounces is greater than the criminality incurred. Let us examine them.

1. I conceive you to ask, first, whether the return that God requires from you is not greater than the means he has bestowed; or whether he is not gathering where he has not strawed.

What God requires is that we should love him with all our hearts. We ask, then, whether he has, or has not, given us the means of doing this. In order to an answer we must push the question back, and inquire wherein the means of doing it consist. Now the means of loving God with all our hearts consist, first, in having a heart so constituted as duly and certainly to feel such inducements to love as may be presented to the understanding; and secondly, in having intelligibly presented to the understanding suitable and sufficient inducements to love God supremely. These things being so, then we have the means of loving God with all our hearts, for, in such circumstances, it requires only consideration to pro-

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duce this result. But these are in fact the constitution and circumstances of man; whence it follows that man has the means of loving God with all his heart. And if this be the case, when God requires man to love him with all his heart, he does not require more than he has given him means to fulfil, nor, therefore, an unreasonable return for what he has bestowed. He gathers what he has strawed, and no more. He has bestowed the talents, and expected nothing from us but to use them according to our several ability.

2. In relation to the system of responsibility, I conceive you to ask, secondly, whether the punishment denounced be not greater than the criminality incurred. Not to have loved God appears to you an unimportant fault, and one for which it is very unreasonable that you should be sent to hell, and made to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire.

Let me here request you in the outset, not to be misled by the awful metaphorical terms so frequently employed to describe the divine anger. I know that the scripture speaks of God's *fury*, and of the future sufferings of the wicked as *unquenchable fire;* nor have I any wish to retract or qualify anything that is declared in the word of God. But it is plain that these terms are metaphorical, and not literal; and that they do not describe the punishment of the wicked, or tell us what it is, but only illustrate it by comparing it with other things, more or less adapted to exhibit its character. I feel quite justified in saying, therefore, that, according to scripture, hell is not fire, nor worms, nor chains, nor darkness. If you

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ask me what then hell is, I answer, it is the suffering of God's disapprobation. If again you ask me what is the meaning of such frightful expressions, I say that they are intended to show how awful God's disapprobation is. Their force is to prove, doubtless, that God's disapprobation is a very dreadful thing; but still it is only God's disapprobation that they are brought to illustrate. Divested of metaphor, the simple statement is, that, if you have not loved him as required, he will both disapprove your conduct, and express his disapprobation towards you in such a way as will make you directly sensible of it. The severe suffering which this will occasion will arise, not from any violence on his part, but from the glory of God himself, and the intimate connexion there is between his approbation and the final happiness of every intelligent creature.

The question properly before us, therefore, is, whether the disapprobation of God is a disproportionate recompense for not having loved him supremely. This is just like asking whether our not loving God supremely is any fault at all; for, if it be, it would seem that disapprobation must justly follow it, on the common principle of disapproving whatever is wrong. This is a case, moreover, in which criminality is very manifest. For God has given us the means of loving him supremely; and, if we had not neglected the sense of right which prompted us to it, and refused the consideration by which it would have been produced, we should certainly have realized the fulfilment of his will. Do this refusal and resistance constitute no fault, and deserve no

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blame? Then nothing can do so; the very words should be obliterated from the language of men, and disapprobation in any and every respect for ever banished from the world. Were any servant to fail of his duty to us on the same ground, we should reprove him with just severity; nor will our Maker and our Judge be unjust, when, for such returns, he shall enter into judgment with us.

Mark well, dear reader, the conclusion to which we are come. You would fain not give an account of yourself to God; just as a person of high spirit would rather not be a servant or a steward, but in a state of independence. Now I will not here insist upon the obvious fact, that your unwillingness makes no difference at all in the certainty that you must stand in judgment hereafter; but rather press upon you the truth, that, in bringing you into judgment, God does you no wrong. He has a right to judge you, which you yourself acknowledge to be equitable, because it is the same by which you bring your servants to account before you. Although your Maker did not previously consult your inclination in this respect, he has in fact given you means of action to employ for him. He had a right to confer them, because he conferred your existence; and, having done so, he has a right to hold you answerable for the just use of them, however you might prefer a different course, or wish that you had never possessed them at all.—And as you cannot reasonably object to being held answerable, so neither, in the next place, can you claim to be held answerable for less than God requires. He demands only that you should

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love him with the strength you have, while he sets before you inducements to this which are amply sufficient, and which consideration would render effectual. No requirement can be more reasonable, and no standard, therefore, more righteously adopted in judgment. Having failed in this, you have no justification, nor anything to plead in bar of condemnation.—Equally impossible, in the last place, will it be for you, when sentence passes against you as a sinner, to complain of your treatment. Your punishment will be only the disapprobation of your Maker. What can it be less? Or what ought it to be less? It is a recompense which sin most justly deserves, and which no sinner can with any show of reason expect to escape, in a degree proportioned to the measure of his criminality.

Is it not time for you to consider, therefore, what this condemnation is? Know you not that God's disapprobation is set forth by figures of fearful import, and language indicating it to be the source of intense and unutterable suffering? Is not judgment at hand? Will its doom admit of any reversion? Is not your state as a sinner dreadful, and powerfully adapted to awaken your anxiety? Will you not cry, are you not even now crying, What must I do to be saved? O to escape from the wrath to come!

ADDRESS III.

O SINNER, guilty and condemned! God, who is rich in mercy, is not unmindful of your misery. He knew it long before it was discovered by yourself,

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and of his own infinite kindness has provided a remedy. He hath so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. This is the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world; for the chastisement of our peace was upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed. Though he knew no sin, yet was he made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. As he died for our offences, so he was raised again for our justification; and, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us, he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him. His invitations are most ample and encouraging. Hear his call: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; for him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

This is for you good tidings of great joy. Every thing needful to your salvation is complete, and salvation itself is fully prepared for your possession, the glorious gift of free and sovereign grace. You are called upon to make no atonement, to shed no blood, to offer no expiation; all this is superseded by the shedding of the blood of Christ. In order to have the benefit of his interposition, you are but to come to Christ, or to God through him. You are but to repent, and to believe on the Lord Jesus; for upon repentance your sins shall be blotted out, and whosoever believeth shall be saved. But this you must do; for except we repent we shall all likewise perish, and he that believeth not shall yet be condemned.

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Nor is this a matter of mere necessity in order to your escape from ruin, it is enjoined upon you as itself a duty; your failing in which will be regarded by God as directly criminal, and more deeply so than your primary violation of his law. Your not embracing the Redeemer he holds to be a greater sin than your not having loved your Creator. This is the grand manifestation of character to which he now looks; it is the chief matter which he will bring into judgment; and, if you should be finally condemned, it will be pre-eminently because you have not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God.

You perceive, therefore, dear reader, that you are still indispensably called into action. Something is prescribed to you which you must be, or you are undone. Your future and eternal condition actually turns upon this point. This is a state of things which may reasonably engage your severe inquiry. Its aspect on one hand is that of most animating hope—you may be saved; but it wears on the other an appearance of hard necessity—you must repent.

1. What is it that is thus required of you?

I need not at present enter further into this question than to say, that it is a state of mind. The phrases coming to Christ, repenting, believing, and whatever others may be used in the same reference, strictly and uniformly import a state of mind, and nothing more. Now this is well worthy of your observation. This was what the law of God required of you in the first instance; and it is what the gospel, with all its riches of grace, requires of you in

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the second: the two methods of divine proceeding you perceive to be framed on one and the same principle, namely, the perfect equity of calling upon you to acquire a specific state of mind.

2. But where is the equity of your being thus left, and of salvation being poised on the single circumstance of your attaining a prescribed state of mind?

Observe, then, that you still have the means of attaining to any state of mind to which suitable and sufficient inducements are set before you. The means of doing this consist solely in the faculty of consideration, with a heart that answers to it, both of which you have, if you are of sound mind; there is nothing inequitable, therefore, in suspending your salvation on the attainment of any state of mind, if suitable and sufficient inducements to it are exhibited. We must go on to ask, therefore, in the next place, whether any motives are presented to you suited and sufficient to induce you to repent.

3. The answer to this question is easy, but it can scarcely be brief. The scripture is full of reasons why you should repent. It exhibits the holy law and righteous authority of God, the force and justice of your obligations to him, together with the multitude and aggravation of your sins, both of heart and life, in a manner so powerful as to cover you with shame. It represents your misery under the present influence of sin, and your danger of future and eternal perdition, in a light most deeply and awfully affecting. It shows you the wonderful extent of the divine goodness and long-suffering, and the boundless

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love of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for you, and beseeches you to be reconciled to God. It quickens you by conviction, it warns you of wrath, it cheers you with hope, it woos you by love, it urges you by the near approach of death and judgment; and I may safely appeal to you whether these are not sufficient reasons why you should repent. Your conscience testifies that they are; and that, if you do not repent, you are acting in defiance of all the weightiest considerations which can ever be brought to bear upon the minds of men. In no case are motives exhibited to you having a thousandth part of the force of these.

Let us return, therefore. For, if you have the means of attaining to any state of mind to which suitable and sufficient inducements are set before you, and if there are set before you suitable and sufficient inducements to the prescribed state of mind on which salvation depends, then you have the means of attaining that state of mind, and, with it, salvation itself. You are, consequently, most equitably treated. Salvation is put into your own hands, and, if you lose it, it will be your own fault; it will be because you have not done that which you have the means of doing. It is quite time, then, that you should arouse yourself to action, lest, while you sleep, your destruction come. You cannot sleep and be safe.

4. I may perhaps imagine your next question to be this: But how am I to attain a different state of mind from that in which I am? A very important inquiry, truly, and one most readily answered. You are to produce what effects you think right on the

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state of your own mind, by the consideration of topics adapted to your design; such topics being sure to act according to their nature if duly weighed, and being also sure to accomplish the object if in themselves sufficient for that purpose. We have already seen, that the truths exhibited as inducements to the state of mind with which salvation is connected are sufficient for that purpose: if, therefore, you wish to attain that state of mind, give due attention to them, and they will not fail of their effect. It is precisely for this effort of attention that God himself calls upon you. "O that they were wise," says he, "and would consider these things!" Hence also the numberless instances in which he requires men to hearken to him, which is accurately expressive of attentive hearing: "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." This, in truth, may be regarded as the primary thing which God demands of you, since he himself has so arranged other points, that, if you do this, everything else will certainly follow, which may fulfil his commands and secure your own welfare.

5. Here you may, perhaps, wish to know more particularly what the state of mind connected with salvation is. I have called it, in scripture language, coming to Christ, repentance, and faith; it is also called in the sacred word being reconciled to God. All these convey the same general idea of a total change of your feelings on religious subjects, especially manifested by a submissive acquiescence in the way of salvation by the death and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. The truths which are adapt-

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ed and sufficient to effect this change are contained in God's holy word; and the consideration of them which will infallibly lead to this result, is nothing more than an honest, teachable, and persevering one, such as you very well know the case to deserve. It does not, indeed, need more than a single moment's realizing view to decide your feelings; but, certainly, you will not have fulfilled one half of your duty in this respect, before your heart will be broken with penitence and inflamed with love.

I will now only ask you, whether this is more than your soul is worth? Whether, if you perish through the refusal of such a method, you will not be chargeable with your own ruin, and give yourself cause for bitter and unanswerable reproaches? Shall I now leave you to enter into your chamber, and look full in the face those heart-stirring things which are arrayed for your contemplation? The Lord meet with you there!

ADDRESS IV.

Perhaps you will assure me, dear reader, that you have often thought of divine things, and have often prayed too, and have not found any beneficial effect. I am not willing to suspect you of an attempt to deceive me, but I fear you are deceiving yourself. First, as to your prayers. Have not many, have not all of them been characterized by formality? You have been upon your knees; but did you express any

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real desire before God? Many persons are so ignorant as to call it prayer, when they merely repeat a form, such as the Lord's prayer, or the church collects, or some other. But if you are not so ignorant as this, you may recollect many instances in which your prayers have been in word only; and when, whatever words may have passed from your lips, your heart was quite vacant of desire. Or, if you think you have at any time expressed real desire before God, what have you desired? Perhaps pardon, deliverance from hell, or some similar blessing; but you have desired them apart from holiness. You may easily be convinced, I think, that this never was your desire; neither is it so now. You have never, therefore, put up a prayer that God could listen to you for a moment. You have never cultivated a spirit of reconciliation to God. He has never seen you at his throne but as a rebel, cherishing your enmity to him, while you would fain cover yourself from his deserved indignation. You have never placed yourself in an attitude of peace before him, for you have not submitted to the righteousness of his Son; you have never assumed a position, therefore, in which, as a just and holy God, he could listen to your supplications. Or you may have betaken yourself to prayer as a refuge from duty. You do not like the trouble of thinking, and of contending with the evils of your own heart; but to pray, in your notion of it, is a much easier thing; and therefore you have recourse to prayer, in order to justify yourself in neglecting consideration. Or perhaps you imagine, that by praying you do all that you can, and therefore all that you ought; and, finding

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that prayer does no good, you comfort yourself, it may be, that your prevailing worldliness is no longer your fault, but that you have shifted the blame of it upon your Maker. 'I have prayed,' you are ready to say, 'and what can I do more?' Herein you altogether mistake, both your primary duty, and the only means of changing the state of your mind. These are not prayer, but consideration. Excellent as prayer is in itself, prayer without consideration is both useless and absurd: yet more, it is wicked; it shows that your heart really cleaves to sin, and only wants a cover for its obstinacy.

Next, as to your assertion that you have often thought of religious subjects without benefit.

1. It is only a few of them, I suspect, that have engaged your attention. Are there not many aspects of divine things, to which you must acknowledge you have never given any consideration at all? Have you even at any time taken the pains to inquire, whether there were not some other serious and important truths adapted to affect the heart? Most certainly you have not. Your conscience has laid hold upon some few of the truths of religion which happened to come in its way, and so you have given them a thought; but a far greater number of the topics fitted to convert the heart are yet to you as things unknown. Look carefully into the word of God, and see if it be not so. And can you expect so partial and inaccurate a view of truth to produce the effect which you profess to desire?

2. I may probably say, too, that your attention has not been fixed upon the topics best adapted to affect

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your heart. Perhaps some conviction of outward sin, rather than a view of inward corruption; perhaps a thought of the wrath to come, without a touching recollection of Him that is willing to save; perhaps a cherished idea that the vilest sinner may be saved, apart from the remembrance that the wicked must forsake his way. How can such mutilated thoughts as these produce the effect you profess to have desired? They much more probably minister, by an easy perversion, to your tranquil continuance in sin.

3. To this it may be added, that to the topics which have entered your mind you have given a very slender and inadequate attention. You have often truths of these things, you say. How often? Have you thought of them every day, with the morning light, and the evening shade; and has the savour of them been spread through your busy hours? The very question startles and confounds you. By often thinking of religion, you mean that you have thought of it occasionally, once in a few months, or a few weeks, or a few days, which is often enough for you. And when you do think of serious things, how do you think of them? Do you set apart a portion of time to entertain them, with the advantage of retirement, and of a mind withdrawn as far as may be from worldly vanities and cares? Do you then take from God's own word the representations of eternal things, and endeavour to bring them home to your heart with their utmost power? Have you repeated this exercise every day through any considerable length of time? I know you cannot answer me these questions. You have done nothing like this. Your thoughts of re-

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ligion have been only such as have floated across your mind amidst worldly concerns, never welcomed, and seldom entertained for a moment; thoughts which you have been more pleased to forget than ready to recall. Or, if ever you have gone into solitude to pursue such reflections, it has been but occasionally, and you have yielded speedily to the feelings of indifference or worldly love, which solicited your abandonment of so unwelcome an employ. And did you ever expect that such thoughts of religion would be influential? If they were, religion must be very unlike to everything else; for, on no other subject would such thoughts lead to any beneficial result. Nor did you ever believe that you were giving to religious subjects the consideration they deserved. It is highly probable that you never even asked yourself whether you were paying them a due regard or not; certainly, whenever you might have done so, your own conscience would have told you that you were not. And yet, though you cannot make any pretensions to having paid such a regard to religious subjects as you know they deserved, you complain that you have thought of them without effect!

4. I may charge you with yet a further fault; You have shown no willingness to yield to the force of such thoughts as may have been brought to your mind. When you have been convinced of sin, you have not taken up that conviction thus:—'Now I see that this is wrong; I ought to be sorry for it, and loathe it, and humble myself before God on account of it.' When a thought of eternity has entered your mind, you have made no attempt to apply it, as by saying,

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'O my soul, think of this! I am soon to be either in heaven or in hell; and what manner of person ought I to be!' The same might be said of every other truth. You have not tried, you have not wished, that they should influence you, but have felt rather glad to evade their influence by forgetfulness, if not to destroy it by inviting thoughts of a contrary tendency. And can you wonder that your thoughts of religion have been powerless?

5. I will direct your attention to one circumstance more, which will show you that the truths of religion are in fact powerful, to the full extent to which they are considered. You have never entertained a thought of religion for a moment, which did not produce some effect. Whenever you have thought about it, under whatever aspect, you have found that it had a tendency to make you serious, and even anxious; and, if you have at any time thought of it more closely, or for a longer period, you have found this tendency more strong. What is this but a decisive testimony to the power of religious truths over the heart, as far as consideration is given to them? Suppose you had carried the consideration of them further? Their influence, of course, would have been greater. Suppose you had given them the full consideration you knew them to deserve? Their influence would have been greater still; nay, it would have been decisive and effectual. There is no reason why they have not induced you to repent, but because you have treated them with consciously unmerited neglect.

Remember, therefore, dear reader, that this excuse also is taken away from you. If you repent, it must

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arise from reflection; it can arise from no other means, and it will infallibly arise from this. The question is, Will you, or will you not, attend to God's call? If you will not, his indignation will justly follow your rebellious obstinacy. If you will, enter into your closet, and consider duly the objects adapted to prevail with you; and the Lord meet with you there!

ADDRESS V.

WELL, my friend, have you been into your closet? I will conceive you, dear reader, to say that you have, and that you are still prepared to complain of not finding the advantages you had been led to expect. Have you, then, duly reflected on the solemn truths relating to your eternal welfare? You cannot, probably, say that you have. You have been alone, but your thoughts have been drawn aside by other objects, and you have not fixed them on divine things for even a few moments. Allow me then to observe, that it is no wonder the state of your mind has undergone no change. This was to result from due consideration, and from that alone; but you have given no due consideration to serious things, and for this reason they have produced no effect. I may still maintain, therefore, that due consideration will be effectual, and might again press it upon you. But if I were to urge you to return to your chamber, you would perhaps say, It is useless: I cannot reflect. Let me know, however, what you mean when you say you cannot reflect. You do not mean that the exercise of reflection, or consideration itself, is impracticable to you? You can

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still reflect on matters of worldly business, or give attention to the affairs of life; only you cannot attend to the concerns of religion. I understand you, then; and it is important that you should understand yourself. The consideration of religious subjects is so unwelcome to you, that your heart shrinks from it; your feelings have so much levity and worldliness in them, that they drive away all serious thoughts. Do you call this not being able to reflect? It is surely not being willing to reflect, or rather being determined that you will not. What are those light and wicked feelings of yours, that they are to banish matters of the utmost moment from your regard, and even to prevent your thinking of them? Or what are you but a foolish and a wicked man, to suffer them to do so? Would you permit similar causes to draw you from an examination of your worldly affairs? Why, then, from an inquiry into the state of your soul?

You are, however, learning by experience one thing, which, though you may have often heard it, you never knew or believed, probably, till now; you are learning the plague of your own heart. Must it not be an evil heart which is so reluctant to look at the things of another world, which refuses to be brought at all into contact with them, and pertinaciously baffles every effort at consideration by its cherished worldliness and levity? See also to what awful consequences it leads. You are thus induced to trifle with your own soul and your most important interests, to reject your Saviour, and to defy your judge. You waste time, you forget eternity, and you leave death, judgment, and hell, to come at their leisure, aud overwhelm you with unutterable terrors. Are you not amazed at your own

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image? Resolute trifler that you are, what will become of you? Whither will this wicked heart conduct you, but to everlasting sorrow?

You must not, however, imagine for a moment that this reluctance which baffles you, affords any justification, or even any excuse, for your inconsideration and neglect. What is itself wicked can furnish no excuse for other wickedness. Your heart is evil; but see to it, for it should be good, and God commands you to make it so. "Make you a new heart, and a new spirit," says he, Ezek. xviii. 31; and again, "Wash thine heart from wickedness," Jer. iv. 14. This command, you perceive, proceeds upon the principle already stated, that, when sufficient inducements to any state of mind are presented to us, that state of mind may be justly required at our hands, because consideration will infallibly produce it. For the correction of your evil heart, therefore, you are still thrown back on the necessity and the sufficiency of consideration.

You may, perhaps, think of relieving yourself from your present difficulty by another method. You may think of prayer, and of the many encouragements to it which are given us in the holy scriptures; and may be ready to say, "Will it not be serviceable if I ask God to give me a new heart, and a right spirit?"

Now prayer, however seemingly excellent and beneficial, differs essentially in its nature and effects, according to the character and situation of those who offer it. Whenever it is of such a kind, and presented under such circumstances, that a holy and righteous God can accept and answer it, it is unquestionably a

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most beneficial exercise; but, should this not be the case, it is difficult to conceive that any advantage can arise from it at all. Rejected prayer must clearly be useless.

But perhaps you ask, and not without surprise, "Can any prayer be rejected? And especially prayer for a new heart?" Let us calmly consider this question for a moment.

I know that God is merciful, unutterably merciful. But is he not also holy? Is he not of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? Is he not towards transgressors a consuming fire? You are unholy, and deeply polluted by sin: how can you approach this holy Lord God? Or, if you do, what can await you, but an expression of his abhorrence and disgust?

I know that God is merciful: but is he not also just? And, as a righteous governor and judge, is he not necessitated to maintain an inflexible administration of his law? By that law (since you have broken it) you are condemned to the forfeiture of your whole interest in his friendship, and set apart to an approaching and final destruction. In such a situation, how can your prayers be heard? The officers of justice obstruct your admission to your Maker's presence, until you shall be summoned to hear your eternal doom. To this you may answer, that the vilest of sinners is encouraged to pray through Jesus Christ. And this is true. But, before a sinner can *pray* to God through Christ, he must *look* to God through Christ. You cannot avail yourself of the mediation of Christ, until first you have accepted it. This is the very thing which God requires you to do, and upon the doing of which your eternal welfare is suspended.

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Do this, and everything is done; this is the very change of heart for which you are about to pray. But this is the very thing about which you make so much difficulty, and to which you offer so much resistance. In your present attitude, your unbelief is obstructing the acceptance of your prayers.

Besides, what is there in your prayers, that they deserve to be heard? You think you desire a new heart. But, if you really do so, why do you not apply yourself to that vigorous reflection on transforming topics, by which you might produce it? The truth is, that you are going to pray, merely because you do not like to work; you want to throw that upon God, which, although it is both your duty and your happiness, is too troublesome for you. Can you expect him to listen to such a request? Can he—can you—believe it to be even a sincere one?

How fallacious your idea is that every one who prays will be heard, you may clearly gather from various passages of scripture, which designate no inconsiderable number of persons whom God will not hear. One of them I may quote from Proverbs xxviii. 9, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." It is worth your inquiry, whether this is not precisely your own character. If you do not treat instruction with contempt, you allow yourself in a practical and prevailing neglect of it. You do not bring yourself to the full and fixed contemplation of divine things, to which you are summoned. You turn away your ear; and your prayer can be nothing but an abomination to the Lord.

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What I have intended to show you by these remarks is, that, as a remedy for your present difficulty, prayer is useless. Do not imagine that prayer will save you. Prayer will not save any man; it has no adaptation to that end; it was never designed for it; and an expectation of being saved by it can arise only from a deep ignorance of your lost condition. The deliverance of a sinner from righteous condemnation requires a sacrifice for sins, even the precious blood of Christ; and the method of securing to ourselves the advantage of his death is not by prayer, but by submitting to his righteousness. It is true that this state of mind may be exercised in prayer; but it is also true that prayer may be largely used without this state of mind. Everything depends upon this, and therefore your whole attention should be directed to it. By being unmindful of it, thousands of persons pray themselves into hell. Neither imagine that, having prayed, you have done your duty, and may leave the rest to God. Your direct, immediate, and indispensable duty is to repent, from the obligation and necessity of which prayer by no means relieves you. Neither deem it a hardship that you are called upon to effect a change, in circumstances in which prayer is useless. What is your need of it, for a purpose for which consideration alone is sufficient? Betake yourself again, and with your utmost energy, to this only rational method of struggling with an evil heart. Struggle, as you would with a highwayman for your property, or with an assassin for your life. Neither let it be forgotten, how short a time you may have to try the experiment, and how soon he that hardeneth his neck may

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be destroyed without remedy. Remember that reflection is your last hope, and that, turning a deaf ear to this imperative call, you abandon yourself entirely to your own wickedness, and its dreadful results. Yet understand why and how it is that you perish. It is not because you do not pray, but because you do not repent. It is because you do not attain a particular state of mind, which you have the means of attaining, inasmuch as the truths set before you, being duly considered, will infallibly produce it. Do not endeavour, therefore, to shift the mischief or the guilt to any other quarter. They lie wholly with yourself. Your perdition is as much your own act, and you have as truly the means of preventing it, as if you had this moment a dagger in your hand, and I were speaking of your plunging it into your bosom. Will not all heaven weep, and all hell wonder, at the cool and dreadful obduracy with which you can perpetrate the deed of eternal sorrow?

ADDRESS VI.

May I hope that I meet you now, my dear reader, with pleasure? I trust you have at length submitted yourself to the Lord. You know what it is to take your affections away from a world to which you have so long given them, and to consecrate them to God, on the altar which the blood of Christ has sanctified. Is it not thus with you?

If you hesitate a moment in giving me an answer to this question, it is not because you feel that you must answer it in the negative, but only because you cannot yet say all that you desire. Your efforts of meditation have not been altogether in vain. You

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begin to see something, which hitherto you have not seen. There are strange heavings within your bosom; though as yet, perhaps, you seem only to learn your own ignorance and hardness of heart, and to be more blind and obdurate than ever, so that your condition appears to you to be awful indeed. Or perhaps you can say that the Lord has softened your heart, and enlarged it in submission; leading you as a lost and helpless sinner to the Saviour's footstool, and inspiring you with hope, if not with joy and peace, in believing.

Whatever the peculiarities of your case may be (and there are endless diversities in the operations of the same Spirit), I doubt not you will acknowledge that you are indebted to the blessed Spirit for every measure of beneficial change. It has been wrought in opposition to yourself, and in the face of long prevalent feelings, which have been broken down, and brought into captivity to Christ, by a power consciously not your own. Long did you resist, and still would you have resisted, had not a gracious friend disarmed you, and laid you low at his feet. If you are now willing instead of unwilling, it is because he has made you so, in the day of his power.

To whom, therefore, have you to ascribe the glory? Manifestly to him who has wrought the change. It might have been to yourself, if you had shown any disposition towards it, or if you had of your own accord made use of the means in your possession; but, seeing that, with the means in your hands, you neglected the great salvation, and turned from him that called you, what can ever belong to you but shame and confusion of face? All the praise is due

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to the God of your salvation. You are a monument of his mercy, a trophy of his victorious grace; and, while time or immortality endures, you will have to say, "Not unto me, not unto me, O Lord, but unto thy name be glory, for thy mercy's sake!"

While self-gratulation is thus destroyed, it is important you should learn also the greatness of your obligations. You should neither overlook, nor forget, what and how much grace hath done for you. It was much that Christ should die for you, and that a way should thus be opened for your reconciliation to God; but was it not hard, too, that you would not be reconciled? You wilfully cherished and perpetuated a state of enmity towards God. What might he not have done with you? But what did he do? Instead of leaving you to your obstinacy, he sent his own Spirit into your heart, to weary you of your evil ways, and constrain you to seek his face. He himself opened the heart which you locked against him; and the blessedness which he has shed abroad there is not of your seeking, but of his own bringing, unsought. The first serious thought you entertained he inspired, and dictated the submission you rendered. Could he have done more, or could you have deserved less? And what does he now deserve of you, but a life of grateful purity and devotedness, immovable and unquenchable for ever?

At the same time it is worthy of your observation, that the blessed Spirit has wrought this change in you, in a method adapted, not to contradict, but to confirm all your views of primary duty and guilt. What he has done may be summed up in this brief description—he has led you to consideration; and by

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the consideration of divine things he has transformed your heart. You are conscious that similar consideration of these things would, at any time, have had the same effect; so that, whatever doubt you may have affected respecting it before, you have convincing evidence now, that the means of repentance and salvation were in your own hands, and that your state of impenitence was one of entire wilfulness and deep criminality. Ah! why did you neglect these heart-subduing truths so long? With what bitterness and shame have you now to look back on that guilty period; and how powerfully should the recollection of it animate you, while you endeavour to live henceforth to him that loved you, and gave himself for you!

You have received also a lesson of great importance respecting the future discipline of your heart. Although the reigning power of sin is broken, and the dispositions which now prevailingly operate within you are holy, you will perpetually find, perhaps you find already, that evil propensities retain considerable power, and will strive to regain the ascendancy. As it were in aggravation of this mischief, the new-born principles of holiness will discover, not only much actual feebleness, but a hasty tendency to decay. Hence will arise the necessity of a continual and vigorous discipline of your own heart, in order to further the progression, and even to maintain the existing influence, of spiritual feeling. You will need little to impress upon you the importance of this object. Your happiness, your usefulness, and the glory of God by you—your fitness for duty, for temptation, and for sorrow—your readiness for death, for

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judgment, and for heaven—the very evidence of your sincerity itself, and everything that is dear to you as a christian, are identified with the permanence and advancement of the change you have experienced. If it should become stationary or decay, your condition will be characterized both by guilt and wretchedness. Establishment and growth in grace, however, cannot be secured, or rationally expected, without diligent endeavour. It has never been attained by abandoning oneself to accidents, or by confiding in the innate power of piety. Growing christians have always been laborious ones. It will be indispensable for you, therefore, to maintain over your own heart a close watch and a resolute discipline. If you should ever find yourself at a loss for the means of doing this, you may derive instruction from reviewing the process of your conversion. The means by which the prevalence of carnality was disturbed and broken, was consideration; and by consideration must it be pursued to its final extermination. As piety arises out of an impressive view of divine realities, so it will bear an invariable proportion to the intensity with which they are habitually contemplated. If you would be a steady and growing christian, you must be a person of habitual meditation on the things of God; I mean of realizing influential meditation, bringing the powers of the world to come into effective application to your own mind. To this end a habit of daily retirement will very much contribute, and it is a habit of more importance than any other to the stability and strength of piety. In your chamber your perception of divine things will in all probability be most vivid; there your self-application of them

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will certainly be most easy and unimpeded. There you will most distinctly realize the existing carnality of your mind, and there, if at all, will the great struggle with it be carried on. Above all things, therefore, maintain, with unflinching resolution, amidst whatever difficulties, the habit of daily retirement for consideration and prayer. To suffer it to be broken in upon is to allow yourself to be materially weakened; to relinquish it is to abandon yourself to ruin.

Should you, in the course of your experience, ever find the inward conflict so severe as to discourage you, and be led to doubt whether the utmost diligence of meditation and spiritual culture will conquer a heart so evil as you may find yours to be, do not hastily despond. Great as the power of temporal things may be, that of eternal things is far greater. Only realize them by intent contemplation, and you will feel them to be so. Sin within you may strive, but, while you maintain such an attitude, it will not prevail. You have gone through one conflict in which things unseen have triumphed, and from hence may gather an assurance that they will triumph again. No man yet has left us the testimony, that this world subdued him while his eye was fixed upon that which is to come; and, if you mark your own experience, you will invariably find that the advantages which our adversary obtains over us are gained by drawing us off from converse with eternity. However hard the battle may be, therefore, do not distrust your weapon. Only use it manfully in fighting the good fight of faith, and you shall lay hold of eternal life.

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